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**Peter Damian and 'the World': Asceticism, Reform and Society in Eleventh-Century Italy**

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**Peter Damian and ‘the World’: Asceticism, Reform and  
Society in Eleventh-Century Italy**

**Michael Richard Gledhill**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**

**Department of History, King’s College London**

**2012**

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The financial support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council has been crucial for the completion of this project. Their money bought me the time I needed to undertake the research and training necessary to write this thesis. On top of this they funded my research trip to Italy (November – December 2011), where I was lucky enough to be able to spend precious time with the manuscripts in the Vatican Library, and to travel to Fonte Avellana and Monte Cassino to get a first-hand look at the landscape of medieval asceticism. The librarians in the Vatican Library were extremely courteous and helpful, as were the staff at the monasteries I visited, and they have my thanks.

King's College London has been a wonderful institution at which to pursue my research. The college has my especial gratitude for providing me with vital training, particularly in languages, free of charge. The library staff at the Maughan have also been a great help. But, much more than this, I have been lucky to work in a stimulating research environment in the department of History. The post-graduate medievalist community at King's – Henry Fairbairn, Chris Tilley, Julie Mumby, Richard Cassidy, Mike Clasby, Sophie Ambler, William Stewart-Parker and Dhwani Patel – have always been willing to share ideas and blueberry muffins in the canteen at the IHR. The IHR itself, and the evening seminars that it supports, have been very useful indeed.

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and a rock of companionship. There are many others whose ideas, support and friendship have been invaluable. And (saving the best till last) I'd like to thank my wife, Ann O'Reilly, without whom, constant in her belief, love, and willingness to discuss eleventh-century hermits more often than anyone should have to, this project could not have been finished.

### **List of Abbreviations**

BAV	<i>Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana</i>
Blum	O. Blum and I. Resnick, <i>Fathers of the Church Medieval Continuation: The Letters of Peter Damian</i> , 6 vols (1-3, 5-7) (Washington, 1989-2005)
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
MGH SS	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores</i>
PL	<i>Patrologiae Latina</i> ed. J. P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844 – 1864)
Reindel	K. Reindel, (ed.), <i>Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani</i> , 4 vols (Munich, 1983-1993)
SCH	<i>Studies in Church History</i>

### **Illustrations and Maps**

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## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to conduct an analysis of Peter Damian's letters specifically grounded in the immediate social and political contexts within which the letters were produced. Whilst Damian (c. 1007 – 1072) is generally seen as an important figure in the history of the Church as a whole, he is rarely studied as an active member of his contemporary Italian society. This thesis will seek to relate the ecclesiastical to the social, and the clerical/monastic to the lay, and to integrate Damian's approach to women and to gender into the broader picture of his activity in northern and central Italy.

The thesis examines how Damian interacted with “the world” – what he saw as constituting the “*saeculum*”, and how he set himself apart from it. As a hermit, prior, cardinal, papal legate and reformer, Damian straddled institutions, and came into contact with powerful lay people and ecclesiastics alike. What must be done is to build a context, through these interactions, for Damian's rhetoric. There is a sizable corpus of material relating to Damian's social contacts, comprising letters, charters and some narrative works. His role as prior of Fonte Avellana brought him into a series of complex relationships with religious institutions and laymen, yet it remains understudied. Through this material we can see how Damian's positioning of himself as being ‘otherworldly’ was in fact a key aspect of how he acted in the world.

N.B. Biblical quotes are taken from the Douay-Rheims English translation of the Latin Vulgate.

## Introduction

With this thesis I hope to reveal an aspect of the life of Peter Damian (c. 1007 – 1072) that has received very little attention from historians up till now: Damian's relationship with 'the world', or the *saeculum* as it appears in his writings.<sup>1</sup> This enquiry will not be limited to 'the world' as an abstract concept, but will look at the relationships that Damian formed with men and women across northern and central Italy's social landscape: from the peasantry that surrounded his rural hermitages and urbanised local notables, through aristocrats high and low, to the emperor and empress themselves.

In studying such a well-known and influential figure, I am naturally building upon an already rich and diverse body of historical scholarship. Much of the historiography surrounding Peter Damian has come from a strong tradition of religious (particularly Catholic) and theological history. This has focused, by and large, on his theological and philosophical writings.<sup>2</sup> Irven Resnick (who completed the task of translating Damian's *Letters* following the death of the previous translator, Owen Blum O.S.B.) has contributed a great deal to our understanding of the complex ideas contained in some of his longer works. Damian's *De Divina Omnipotentia* (Letter 119) is perhaps his most famous theological work, and it is this text, which explores the relationship between God and time, which ensures Damian a place in histories of medieval philosophy.<sup>3</sup> In a similar vein, there has been a lot of work on Damian's writings that concern the

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<sup>1</sup> The *saeculum* is a key Augustinian concept, where the Two Cities were *permixtae* – 'all mixed up'. See R. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, P. McNulty, *St. Peter Damian: Selected Writings on the Spiritual Life* (London, 1959).

<sup>3</sup> I. Resnick, 'Peter Damian on the Restoration of Virginity: A Problem for Medieval Theology', *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988), pp. 125 – 134; I. Resnick, *Divine power and possibility in St Peter Damian's De divina omnipotentia* (New York, 1992). John Marenbon points out that in this work Damian anticipated thirteenth- and fourteenth-century discussions of divine omnipotence, *Early Medieval Philosophy (450 – 1150)* (London, 1988), pp. 91 – 94. The text also gets a passing mention in B. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London, 1946), p. 434.



monastic and eremitic life. Irvén Resnick, Colin Phipps and Emily Bannister have explored the distinction between eremitism and coenobitic monasticism in Damian's thought, and have found that there was a significant dialogue between the two. Nor was this a purely theoretical interaction, as Damian corresponded with, and visited Monte Cassino and Cluny (particularly with the abbots, Desiderius and Hugh respectively), and exchanged ideas with both.<sup>4</sup>

The context of the eleventh-century reform movements has dominated the study of Damian's writings. The importance of Damian's *Liber Gratissimus* (a treatise on simony in which he asserted that the ordinations performed by simoniacal bishops remain valid) has long been recognised,<sup>5</sup> and the text positions Damian as a moderate voice in the ecclesiastical-legal histories of the reforms.<sup>6</sup> More recently attention has been given to Damian's *Liber Gomorrhianus* (Book of Gomorrah), in which he heavily criticised the sexual practices of the clergy, and warned against the spread of sodomy. After Pierre Payer published an English translation of the book as a stand-alone text,<sup>7</sup> it was taken up by John Boswell in his history of homosexuality, and is now treated as a pivotal text by historians of sexuality, whether they agree with the 'Boswell Thesis' or not.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> I. Resnick, 'Odo of Tournai and Peter Damian: Poverty and Crisis in the Eleventh Century', *Revue Bénédictine* 104 (1988), pp. 114 – 140; I. Resnick, 'Peter Damian on Cluny, Liturgy and Penance', *Journal of Religious History* 15 (1988), pp. 61-75; C. Phipps, 'Romuald — Model Hermit: Eremitical Theory in Saint Peter Damian's *Vita Beati Romualdi*, Chapters 16-27' in W. Sheils (ed.), *Monks, Hermits and the Ascetic Tradition* (SCH 22, 1985), pp. 65–77; E. Bannister '“A monastic ark against the current flood”: the manuscripts of Peter Damian at the Abbey of Montecassino', *European Review of History* 17 (2010), pp. 221–40.

<sup>5</sup> J. P. Whitney, 'Peter Damiani and Humbert', *The Cambridge Historical Journal* 1 (1925), pp. 95-142.

<sup>6</sup> The works of Ian Robinson, Gerd Tellenbach and Uta-Renate Blumenthal are good examples of this tradition.

<sup>7</sup> P. J. Payer, *Book of Gomorrah: An Eleventh-Century Treatise against Clerical Homosexual Practices* (Waterloo, Ontario, 1962).

<sup>8</sup> J. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago, 1980); M. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago, 1998).

Given the importance of his work to these, to put it broadly, histories of thought, it has been remarked that there has been a surprising lack of biographical works on Damian,<sup>9</sup> but as the study of reform itself has advanced since the 1980s, this has started to impact on how Damian is seen. Henrietta Leyser and Lester Little both produced very important (though quite different) analyses of eleventh- and twelfth-century eremitism as a social phenomenon,<sup>10</sup> and in 1980 Bob Moore published the tremendously influential paper ‘Family, Community and Cult on the Eve of the Gregorian Reform’.<sup>11</sup> What makes Moore’s paper so important is that previously the study of reform rhetoric (particularly the focus on simony and nicolaitism) and theology had proceeded more or less independently of the study of the social, political and economic developments of the eleventh century. The Church and monasteries had certainly been part of the social story, but as powerful institutions in the Italian landscape.<sup>12</sup> Moore, drawing on the work of the anthropologist Mary Douglas,<sup>13</sup> sought an analysis that encompassed both the changes in religious rhetoric and the social upheaval of the time. Focusing less upon

<sup>9</sup> E. Bannister, *Peter Damian (c. 1007 – 1072), monastic ideology and the religious revolution of the eleventh century* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Keele, 2008), pp. 68 – 69.

<sup>10</sup> H. Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism: A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe 1000 – 1150* (London, 1984); L. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (London, 1978); Little’s work does not focus solely on the eleventh century, but it occupies a pivotal place in his narrative as a period of economic change. A thesis of economic change (particularly monetisation) driving religious change in this period was also put forward in A. Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1978), and R. I. Moore *The First European Revolution, c. 970 – 1215* (Oxford, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> R. I. Moore, ‘Family, Community and Cult on the Eve of the Gregorian Reform’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Fifth Series*, Vol. 30, (1980), pp. 49-69.

<sup>12</sup> C. Violante, ‘I Vescovi dell’Italia Centro-Settentrionale e lo Sviluppo dell’Economia Monetaria’, *Studi sulla Cristianità Medioevale: Società, Istituzioni, Spiritualità* 5 (1964), pp. 325 – 347; G. Dameron, *Episcopal Power and Florentine Society: 1000 – 1320* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991); cf. L. Provero, ‘Forty Years of Rural History for the Italian Middle Ages’ in I. Alfonso (ed.), *The Rural History of Medieval European Societies: Trends and Perspectives* (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 141 – 172.

<sup>13</sup> The first medievalist to introduce Douglas as an aid to understand Europe around the millenium was Janet L. Nelson in her ‘Society, Theodicy and the Origins of Heresy: Towards a Reassessment of the Medieval Evidence’ in D. Baker (ed.) *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest* SCH 9 (1972), pp. 65 – 77. Nelson took inspiration from Douglas’s *Natural Symbols* to try and understand the new ascetics as a ‘natural symbol’ of the renewed cosmic order. Most other medieval historians, including Moore, Leyser, Elliot and others, have turned instead to *Purity and Danger*, where Douglas laid out the basis of ‘pollution theory’, whereby people and things should not be understood as inherently offensive, but rather as offensive to the order of social categories (hence the famous phrase that dirt is ‘matter out of place’). In later years Douglas critiqued and refined her theories, although these works, like *How Institutions Think* and *Risk and Blame* have not had any real impact on the historiography of the eleventh century. For Douglas references, see bibliography.

the institutional, landowning Church, Moore looked instead to explore the significance of churches, and particularly local priests, to communities. The element of Douglas's social-anthropological model here used – that fear of 'pollution' arises when the actual power wielded by certain members of society exceeds the cultural value assigned to them – appeared for Moore, "to fit the society of pre-Gregorian Europe remarkably aptly."<sup>14</sup> In the changing economic and social conditions of urban hinterlands, priests and women were beginning to have greater influence over the kinship networks that were so important to these communities.<sup>15</sup> Pollution fears thus surrounded the relationships between priests and women, and between priests and money, and there was intense concern about preserving the priests' individual purity.

Moore had focussed on rural communities. A generation later Conrad Leyser made use of Douglas' theories to try to understand the *Liber Gomorrhianus* as a reaction against the moral ambiguities of urban life.<sup>16</sup> He has also brought this approach to bear on the gendered aspects of reform rhetoric, and Damian has featured in studies of the discourse of gender in these eleventh-century movements.<sup>17</sup> Along with these developments, Umberto Longo, Kathleen Cushing and Phyllis Jestice have returned to the problem of Damian's view of eremitism, this time grounding their analyses more firmly in the context of reform. These studies have focused on Damian's interaction with the Vallombrosan order of monks and the rather enigmatic urban hermit Teuzo (a resident of Florence), and have opened up many questions regarding the role of hermits in

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<sup>14</sup> Moore, 'Community and Cult' p. 67.

<sup>15</sup> Moore's ideas on how changes in the distribution of power and wealth challenge existing symbolic hierarchies was influenced by another anthropologist, John Middleton, *Lugbara religion; ritual and authority among an East African people* (London, 1960).

<sup>16</sup> C. Leyser, 'Cities of the Plain: The Rhetoric of Sodomy in Peter Damian's "Book of Gomorrah"', *The Romanic Review* 86 (1995), pp. 191 – 211.

<sup>17</sup> D. Elliot, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1998); C. Leyser, 'Custom, Truth and Gender in Eleventh Century Reform' in R. Swanson (ed.) *Gender and Christian Religion* (SCH 34, 1998), pp. 75 – 91.

eleventh-century society, the geography of eremitism and the limits of legitimate participation in reform.<sup>18</sup> Building on all this work, I hope to expand our understanding of Damian's relationships with the urban cultures of northern and central Italy, but nor shall I neglect the countryside.

Despite this recent attention to Damian, the sources relating to him, and in particular his letters, remain underexploited, and he tends to figure as a passing character in studies of reform, rather than attracting full-scale works in his own right. As a result there has been very little attempt to understand Damian in the context of the contemporary northern Italian society. Particularly pressing is the need to understand Damian's relationship with 'the world'. Celestino Pierucci and Alberto Polverari made a valuable contribution in this direction in 1972 by producing an edition of the charters of Fonte Avellana.<sup>19</sup> Pierucci published an article based on this material for a two-volume collection that same year commemorating the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Damian's death.<sup>20</sup> This demonstrated that a level of materiality inhered in Damian's conception of communal eremitic life, and in the last few years this topic has begun to attract interest once again, at least in Italy.<sup>21</sup>

What I hope to achieve in this thesis is to continue to bring together these rich strands of historical thinking about Damian which have largely developed independently of one another. It is sometimes forgotten that Damian was, as much as anything else, a social

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<sup>18</sup> U. Longo, 'Pier Damiani versus Teuzone: due concezioni sull'eremitismo a confronto' in A. Volpato (ed.), *Monaci, ebrei, santi: Studi per Sofia Boesch Gajano* (Roma, 2007), pp. 63 – 77; K. Cushing, 'Of Locutae and Dangerous Men: Peter Damian, the Vallombrosans, and Eleventh-Century Reform' *Church History* 74 (2005), pp. 740 – 757; P. Jestice, 'Peter Damian against the Reformers' in E. Rozanne Elder (ed.), *The Joy of Learning and the Love of God: Studies in Honour of Jean Leclercq* (Kalamazoo, 1995), pp. 67 – 94.

<sup>19</sup> C. Pierucci & A. Polverari (eds.), *Carte di Fonte Avellana* vol. 1 (975 – 1139) (Rome, 1972).

<sup>20</sup> C. Pierucci 'San Pier Damiano e beni temporali' in *San Pier Damiano nel IX centenario della morte (1072 – 1972)* vol. 2 (Cesena, 1972), pp. 195 – 237.

<sup>21</sup> N. D'Acunto (ed.), *Fonte Avellana nel Secolo di Pier Damiani* (Verona, 2008).

actor. The lack of progress in this area has also meant that analyses of Damian's writings on women, and gender more generally, have not been fully integrated with either his social position or his dealings with actual women.<sup>22</sup> But whilst this thesis aspires to be a study of people, by necessity it remains primarily a study of texts. As such it is important to understand how these texts have come down to us, and what problems they pose to a historian.

### Damian's Letters: Preservation:

The central objects of my research are the letters of Peter Damian. In similar mode to many collections of medieval source-material, the Letters are a product of a thousand years of preservation, editing, omission, both accidental and intentional, and, likewise inclusion. This process began with Damian himself, who has left much evidence of his own keen eye for posterity, and has continued on-and-off over the centuries right up to Kurt Reindel's *Monumenta* editions<sup>23</sup> and the late Owen Blum's translations into English<sup>24</sup> (this torch being taken up by Irven Resnick at the beginning of this century). 180 letters survive, though not all of these are complete, and some are little more than fragments. Reindel's editions are amalgamations of older editions (the most significant of these being Constantine Gaetani's early seventeenth-century efforts) and renewed work with the manuscripts. As no coherent labeling system can be found in the

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<sup>22</sup> There is a short survey provided by Jean Leclercq in which, concentrating on the spiritual aspects of gender, he contrasts Damian's caution towards women ("il se sent vulnérable") with his encouragement of female asceticism ("Pierre Damien n'a pas été un antiféministe"). I hope to add to this with a consideration of Damian's approaches to women of power. See J. Leclercq, 'Pierre Damien et les Femmes' *Studia Monastica* 15 (1973), pp. 43 – 55.

<sup>23</sup> K. Reindel, (ed.), *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*, 4 vols (Munich, 1983-1993).

<sup>24</sup> O. Blum and I. Resnick, *Fathers of the Church Medieval Continuation: The Letters of Peter Damian*, 6 vols (1-3, 5-7) (Washington, 1989-2005).

manuscripts, Gaetani provided his own, dividing Damian's writings into 'letters' and 'works'. Reindel largely did away with this division, categorising any work written in an epistolary format as a 'letter' for the purposes of his edition. He also redesignated the letters, so that now they are numbered in an approximation of chronological order.<sup>25</sup>

As for the manuscripts themselves, the letters largely come down to us in the form of collections.<sup>26</sup> No single collection can boast all of Damian's letters, but there are four major eleventh-century manuscripts, from which the modern editions have, on the whole, been compiled. All four of these manuscripts were copied in Fonte Avellana, using material now lost. Vat. Cod. Lat. 3797 (V1) and Vat. Urb. Lat. 503 (U1) remained at Fonte Avellana for a time (though V1 was moved to St. Mary in Faenza in 1113) before being collected at the Vatican in the seventeenth century. V1 is a fine work (in contrast to the rather varied quality of U1), and enormous in scale and scope.<sup>27</sup> It is ordered according to genre, letters being followed by sermons and verses. The pages were numbered, and texts labelled at the top of each column. It has, however, lost as many as 54 folios over the years.<sup>28</sup> It isn't clear when the tome was begun; it may have been during Damian's lifetime. On this point I have little to add to the existing scholarship, save that amongst the verses in V1, one line stands out in red capitals on 359r: "Kadaloo non pastori sed antiquo draconi", referring to Cadalus, the anti-pope Honorius II, who died in the same year as Damian. If this textual emphasis is taken to

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<sup>25</sup> Many of the dates nevertheless remain uncertain, however. See below. Some of Damian's works that fall outside the tent of 'letters' have been published elsewhere. See G. Tabacco (ed.), *Vita Beati Romualdi* (Rome, 1957) and G. Lucchesi (ed.), *Sancti Petri Damiani Sermones* (Turnhout, 1983). There is also an English translation of the *Vita Beati Romualdi* in C. Phipps, *St. Peter Damian's Life of Romuald* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, London, 1988), and a partial translation in H. Leyser, (ed. and trans.) 'Peter Damian: Life of St. Romuald of Ravenna' in T. Head (ed.) *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology* (London, 2000) pp. 295 – 316.

<sup>26</sup> For the sake of simplicity I will use Kurt Reindel's system of manuscript abbreviations. The first mention will be the full library reference, with the abbreviation to be used from then on in brackets.

<sup>27</sup> It is the largest of the Fonte Avellana manuscripts at 255 x 371mm.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Reindel 1, pp. 16 – 19.

imply the relevance of Cadalus as a figure of hate at the time the manuscript was copied, then perhaps it is evidence for an earlier date.<sup>29</sup>

The other two collections, Montecassino Cod. 358 (C1) and 359 (C2) were copied, partly from V1 and partly from the material now lost,<sup>30</sup> by scribes sent from Monte Cassino, and can be found at Monte Cassino today. There is another product of the Fonte Avellana scriptorium worth mentioning here: John of Lodi's *Collectanea*. John was a fellow hermit at Fonte Avellana, from the mid-1060s, who acted as Damian's scribe in later life. He helped to edit and preserve his letters, had a hand (literally) in the production of U1, and would later become prior of Fonte Avellana, and bishop of Gubbio. His *Collectanea*, in Vat. Cod. Lat. 4930 (V5), is a well presented and organised compilation of excerpts from Damian's letters, although the quality tails off towards the end of the manuscript. The texts are arranged according to the biblical passage cited in the letter.<sup>31</sup> Although the manuscript clearly owes a lot to V1,<sup>32</sup> it has been useful to editors of the letters because the names of the addressees often appear in their expanded form, rather than just initials as they are in the larger work, which also suggests that John continued to have access to material that we don't, or had a good memory, or a good imagination. John of Lodi has, moreover, had a huge influence on historians' study of Damian through his *Vita Petri Damiani*, written, of course, after Damian's death.<sup>33</sup> In the absence of any other evidence for his life until his late thirties, authors have often been willing to treat the *Vita* as reflecting the truth in its

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<sup>29</sup> It is also notable that as Damian's earliest extant letter dates from 1040, his output, measured only by those letters that survive, averaged 5.625 letters a year until his death. Yet no letter can be definitively dated later than 1070. He was certainly still active in the last two years of his life (he died returning from a mission to Ravenna), so perhaps decisions about which letters to keep had already been made?

<sup>30</sup> F. Newton, *The Scriptorium and Library at Monte Cassino, 1085 – 1105* (Cambridge, 1999) p. 312.

<sup>31</sup> For example, the section that compiled citations of Genesis is entitled 'Incipiunt Capitula Libri Genesis'.

<sup>32</sup> Reindel 1, pp. 15 – 16.

<sup>33</sup> John of Lodi, *Vita S. Petri Damiani*, PL 144, 145-180.

fundamentals, although this must inevitably be approached with caution: whilst John was in a good position to become close to Damian, he was hardly a disinterested observer.

There are also a number of smaller manuscripts, containing one or two texts, and instances of individual letters surviving in more varied collections. Vat. Cod. Lat. 4920 and Vat. Cod. Lat. 5075 (V10) are both small, eminently portable copies (116 x 185 and 105 x 160mm respectively)<sup>34</sup> of some of Damian's more substantial letters. V10 is a copy of the *Liber Grattissimus*, his treatise on simony, and V8 contains both the *Liber Gomorrhianus* and the *Iter Gallicum*, an account of Damian's legation to France in 1063, written by one of his monks. These two make an odd pairing, with no obvious thematic overlap, though as they are written in very different hands, they may have been brought together at a later date, linked by association to Damian. Although these manuscripts probably post-date Damian's death, they may be representative of the format Damian used when, as we learn in Letter 12, he sent copies of his 'little works' (*opuscula*) to others.

#### Damian's Letters: Copies, References and Reuse:

How do these later copies relate to what was actually sent? There is an unusual little set of letters – 21, 22 and 23, as they are in the modern editions – which hint at the complexity of the process of preservation, and at the difficulty of reconstructing the letters as the actual residue of communication. Letters 21 and 23 can be found in the important early compilations of Damian's writings, including those copied for the

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<sup>34</sup> Both have been cropped by later binders, but were surely of transportable size.



library at Monte Cassino. 21 is in V1 and C1, as is 23, which is also in U1 and V5. The letters present something of a puzzle, as 21 and 22 share the bulk of their content, whilst 21 and 23 have near identical opening paragraphs, and could conceivably have the same addressee. Evidently there was some recycling going on. Looking first to Letters 21 and 23, despite their strikingly similar opening passages these letters only appear next to each other in two later manuscripts, one of which is a transcription of the other.<sup>35</sup> The judgement that these letters belong together (and later with Letter 22 as well) was not one shared by their earliest copyists. That they appear separately in the same manuscripts makes it unlikely that we are dealing with different drafts of the same letter.

This leads us to the question of the addressees, which in the case of Letter 21 and 23 Giovanni Lucchesi takes to be the same person.<sup>36</sup> As with nearly all the letters, we have mostly only initials to go on, as the full names were omitted. In most manuscripts both letters are simply addressed to ‘B.’ (although in a few manuscripts, including one from the eleventh century, and two copied from a now-lost source, Letter 23 is to a ‘G.’). In three manuscripts the superscripts of Letter 21 refer to the addressee as *iudex*,<sup>37</sup> which is confirmed in the address line, and in V1 it has the title “Bono homini Caesenati”.<sup>38</sup> As for Letter 23, John of Lodi’s *Collectanea* (V5) names him Bonushomo, and says that he was a *causidicus* (an advocate), hence the conclusion that these letters were written to the same man.<sup>39</sup> But this is the only place that he is named Bonushomo, and whilst John of Lodi was for a time Damian’s scribe, this letter may well predate his entry into

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<sup>35</sup> The MSS in question are Vat., Archivo di S. Pietro, cod. D206 (fourteenth-century), and Vat. Cod. Ottob. Lat. 321 (sixteenth-century).

<sup>36</sup> G. Lucchesi, *Clavis S. Petri Damiani* (Rome, 1970) p. 45. See also Blum 1, p. 197, n. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Reindel 1, p. 203, although these all have their roots in a lost source.

<sup>38</sup> Reindel 1, p. 203. One manuscript calls him ‘Benedictus’, but this is not repeated in MSS that share the same root. This same MS is also alone in calling the ‘B’ of letter 23 ‘Bonifacio’.

<sup>39</sup> See Blum 1, p. 197, n. 2; although he incorrectly associates this with Letter 21.

Fonte Avellana, and so there is no reason to privilege his copy over those of others. U1 describes the addressee as a *Philosophus saeculi*<sup>40</sup> in its superscript, and gives the initial ‘G.’. It is possible that in the case of Letter 21 the ‘Bonus homo’ represents not the addressee’s name, but his social standing in the city. It may even be a figurative addressee for an epistolary exemplar.<sup>41</sup> In short, Letter 21 appears to have been to a *iudex* ‘B.’, and Letter 23 to a *Philosophus* ‘B.’ or ‘G.’, and it is impossible to say more with any certainty.

Letter 22 can be distinguished from the others through its tenuous transmission. It exists in only one manuscript, Vat. cod. lat. 650 (V4), and even there it is incomplete, breaking off mid-sentence. This has led to the suggestion that the letter was never sent,<sup>42</sup> although, given the distance between the rest of the extant letters and their actually-transmitted counterparts, this logic does not necessarily follow. V4 is not one of the large eleventh-century collections of Damian’s letters. It is, rather, a compilation of works by different authors, in different hands, to which Damian’s letter was later added. The bulk of the codex may have been put together in the tenth century. One scribe laboured to transcribe writings by authors including Alcuin, Pseudo-Augustine, St. Jerome and John Cassian. Other tenth-century hands added Gregory the Great, Origen, Caesarius, Ephrem the Syrian and St. Basil, to which is added a *Vita* of St. Giles, a supposed eighth-century hermit and monastic founder. These comprise the first 153 folios.<sup>43</sup> Damian’s incomplete letter, in what looks like either an eleventh- or twelfth-century hand not found elsewhere in the manuscript, appears at the end. The

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<sup>40</sup> “Philosopho seculi ut exteriori prudentiae spiritalem sapientiam praeferat et temporali vitae perpetuam incomparabiliter anteponat”.

<sup>41</sup> There are other examples where it seems likely that Damian addressed his letters to fictitious people, as with ‘Peter the Hair-brained’. See Letter 56, Blum 2, 361 – 368.

<sup>42</sup> See Blum 1, p. 208.

<sup>43</sup> See M. Vattasso and F. De Cavalieri, *Codices Vaticani Latini* vol. 1 (Rome, 1902) pp. 503 – 505.

first page of Letter 22 has been copied onto the verso of the existing manuscript, the text before it having been erased and seemingly replaced with the *Vita* of St. Giles. Because Letter 22 begins after the end of this erased text, it seems the *Vita* was copied in at a later date. The Letter itself appears to have been an addendum to the manuscript, however, as although it begins on the same parchment, it continues on folio 154 which differs in size and in the quality of the parchment from the rest of the manuscript,<sup>44</sup> sewn on when the letter was copied. There was clearly at least one other folio, which has become detached at some point, as the text ends abruptly at the foot of 154v.

The dating of the letters is no easier. None of Damian's letters are dated, and the fact that many can be pinned down to a certain period, or a year, or sometimes a particular month, is largely down to the efforts of Lucchesi and his attempts to provide a chronology of Damian's life and writings.<sup>45</sup> These dates rely on either cross-referencing events mentioned in the letters, or narrowing down the date range by identifying certain people. But with these examples, things are far from certain: Lucchesi dates Letter 21 to before 1047 "perche utilizzata nella composizione di EP IV 5" (letter 22), although he doesn't say why it couldn't have been the other way round.<sup>46</sup> He dates Letter 22 on the assumption that Bishop 'G' is Gisler of Osimo, although there is no independent evidence for this, which puts the date of all three letters in doubt. Blum suggests it may nevertheless be from early in his career because in the address line Damian refers to himself simply as 'Peter' rather than 'Peter the Sinner', more common in his later letters. But given that he uses 'Peter the Sinner' in Letter 21, and in earlier letters, this does not appear to have been a consistent stylistic trajectory.

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<sup>44</sup> The bulk of the manuscript is 193 x 274mm, folio 154 is 176 x 263 mm.

<sup>45</sup> G. Lucchesi, 'Per una vita di San Pier Damiani' in *San Pier Damiano nel IX centenario della morte (1072 – 1972)* (Cesena, 1972), vol. 1, pp. 13 – 179, and vol. 2, pp. 13 – 160.

<sup>46</sup> Lucchessi 'Per una Vita di San Pier Damiani' part 1, n. 40.

It is difficult, then, to reconstruct the link between these letters. The current dating (before 1047) is based on no real evidence, and the idea that 21 and 23 are addressed to the same man rests on similarly flimsy foundations. The similarities between 21 and 22 are so extensive that one must have been written with reference to the other, or they were written at the same time. Given 21's much more extensive presence in the extant manuscripts, it seems likely that it was copied into the (now lost) manuscripts of Damian's letters to which he himself had access. Letter 22 could have been copied out from these manuscripts, and given slight alterations to make it more appropriate for the new addressee. We know that Damian had access to copies of his own letters as there were occasions when he referred back to earlier works, sometimes many years later.<sup>47</sup> The tenuous transmission of Letter 22 raises the possibility that there were many more letters like it, based on the 'master copies', that were sent out in slightly altered form to different recipients, but which have now been lost.<sup>48</sup> The similarity of 21 and 23's opening passages indicate not that they share addressees, but that they were subject of the same process of recycling. By no means all the letters possess as complicated a provenance, and many of those that form the source-base for this thesis were almost certainly sent to their addressees. Nevertheless, the letters often have an, at best, indeterminate relationship with the actual missives that were drafted and sent to figures in different walks of life around Italy. Equally, the nature of their collection and preservation means that the audience for most of the letters was much wider than the address line indicates.

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<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Letter 109 109 (written in 1064 to Pope Alexander II), where Damian quotes several passages from Letter 44, to the hermit Teuzo, which had been written c. 1055. See Blum 5, pp. 214 – 219.

<sup>48</sup> There is another example of a lost letter in Letter 109. Damian quoted from a letter to Prior John of Suavicinum, but no such letter can now be found. See. Blum 5, p. 219, n. 39. Likewise in Letter 38, to Bishop Gisler of Osimo. See Blum 2, p. 76, n. 15.

Peter Damian's Letters: The Source Material and Problems of 'Authorship':

The letters are rich objects for the study of Damian's life, but it is also important to address the problems inherent in using a 'ready-made' corpus of this kind, and more particularly one whose centre of gravity is a single historical personage: Peter Damian. Indeed, the historical presence of Peter Damian behind this corpus – a man who occupies a prestigious seat as Doctor of the Church (from 1823), a philosopher-theologian and proto- 'man of letters' – has created complications in the historiography: the corpus becomes an *oeuvre*, with all the baggage that that entails. As early as the fourteenth century, writers like Petrarch and Boccaccio used conflicting conceptions of Damian 'the man' to produce very different readings of his works, and this process continues today.<sup>49</sup> It is important, then, to consider the ideological impact of the 'author function'.<sup>50</sup> In reconstructing what Roland Barthes called the 'Author-God',<sup>51</sup> the Letters have often taken on an unrealistic homogeneity, with 'Damian the Author' the glue that holds them together.

One of the most striking efforts to reconstruct Damian's mind has been Lester Little's rather experimental attempt to make the most of the evidence we have for his life.

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<sup>49</sup> S. Barsella, 'Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Peter Damian: Two Models of the Humanist Intellectual' *Modern Language Notes* 121 (2006), pp. 16 – 48.

<sup>50</sup> M. Foucault, 'What is an Author' in J. Harari (ed.), *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* (1979), pp. 141–60, reprinted in P. Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (London, 1984), pp. 101–20.

<sup>51</sup> R. Barthes 'The Death of the Author' in S. Heath (ed. and trans.), *Image – Music – Text* (London, 1977), pp. 142–148.

Author as Patient:

In Little's article, the notion of the author operates in tandem with the methods of psychoanalysis. This has an impact on the resultant reading of the letters in important ways. Take this passage from a letter to the brothers at Monte Cassino, previously known as *De Laude Flagellorum* (or 'In Praise of Whips'):

O quam iocundum, quam insigne spectaculum, cum supernus iudex de caelo prospectat, et homo semetipsum in inferioribus pro suis sceleribus mactat.<sup>52</sup>

This Little translates as:

What a joy, what an extraordinary sight it will be when the celestial judge looks from heaven and man is hurting himself on account of his transgressions.<sup>53</sup>

To take 'homo semetipsum mactat' as 'man *hurting* himself' certainly manoeuvres the text towards the contemporary psychoanalytical categories that Little was trying to apply (those of Melanie Klein and Erik Erikson). 'A man sacrificing himself' comes nearer to Damian's meaning in the original text. Little's translation also leads him, without further evidence, to suggest that flagellation 'gave him [that is, Damian,] erotic

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<sup>52</sup> Reindel 4, p. 144; "Oh how delightful, how outstanding a spectacle, when the celestial judge gazes down from the heavens, and a man below is sacrificing himself for his sins."

<sup>53</sup> L. Little, 'The Personal Development of Peter Damian' in W. Jordan *et al* (eds.), *Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Joseph R. Strayer* (Princeton, 1976), pp. 317 – 341, p. 337. Little also omits *in inferioribus* from his translation, although its inclusion would not have contradicted Little's conclusion that "Peter's deepest concern as a hermit was his submission to the will of God...yet at the same time he was displaying his old ambivalence to in this dread of any direct encounter or contact." Little, 'The Personal Development of Peter Damian', p. 337.

pleasure.’<sup>54</sup> Damian is handled rather like a patient on the couch with Little taking the role of the analyst, and the *Vita Petri Damiani* is the Oedipal drama retold. The assumption behind this argument, however, and the more moderate ones that have followed in recent decades, is that the Letters afford us a largely unproblematic window onto the ‘mind’ of Peter. The manuscript evidence would suggest that *De Laude Flagellorum* was not one of Damian’s widely circulated texts. Even so, it is bound to the institutional relationships between his eremitic community at Fonte Avellana and the monastery of Monte Cassino.

*The Book of Gomorrah* is similarly presented, and not only by Little, as primarily the product of inner traumas, and there is a supposition that this allows us to glimpse the personal concerns of Damian himself. But the importance of these texts in identifying elements of Damian’s psyche relies on the assumption of their relative uniqueness, whereas in fact, both *De Laude Flagellorum* and *The Book of Gomorrah* are commentaries on very current penitential problems.<sup>55</sup> And it is worth noting that David d’Avray found a similar pattern in the historiography some years ago in relation to Damian’s writings on consanguinity – previous readings having assumed his “quite exceptional horror of human sexuality,” and this assumption having rather skewed their reading of the texts.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Little, ‘The Personal Development of Peter Damian’ p. 340.

<sup>55</sup> The *Liber Gomorrhianus*, although rare in its lengthy discussion of sodomy, was by no means the first text to tackle the subject. The text, for example, relies heavily on the *Decretum* of Burchard of Worms, and actually goes some way towards creating a coherent penitential definition of sodomy from the disparate and occasionally contradictory material that Burchard compiled. That Damian seems to have been one of the earlier Italians to possess a copy of the *Decretum* is itself an important dimension to the *Liber Gomorrhianus* that is often passed over. M. Gledhill, *Peter Damian and the Development of ‘Sodomy’: Sexual Discourse in the Liber Gomorrhianus* (Unpublished MA Thesis, London, 2008).

<sup>56</sup> D. d’Avray, ‘Peter Damian, Consanguinity and Church Property’ in L. Smith and B. Ward (eds.) *Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Margaret Gibson* (1992), p. 72, quoting C. Brooke *The Medieval Idea of Marriage* (1989) pp. 135 – 136. Cf A. Remensnyder, ‘Pollution, Purity, and Peace: An Aspect of Social Reform between the Late Tenth Century and 1076’ in T. Head and R.

### The Reclusive Author:

Letters are a complex genre. In seeking to problematise the ideological effects of ‘authorship’, Roland Barthes attempted to distinguish between two modes of writing:

As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, [a] disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins.<sup>57</sup>

But there may be a question as to whether a historian working on Damian’s letters could make such a distinction at all. Trying to establish the extent to which a particular letter sought immediate political impact, and the extent to which it was, as it were, intransitive, may ultimately result in readings that mislead. Rather, the idea of the ‘Author’ has ramifications for all the texts identified as Damian’s.

The idea of the ‘letter’ as a genre of writing has greatly influenced the Author figure of Peter Damian. Indeed, the corpus of letters is taken as direct evidence that Damian hated the world and eschewed all contact with it. Phyllis Jestice infers that he was ‘doing as much of his work as possible by letter’, the purpose of which was ‘to avoid

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Landes (eds.), *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (New York, 1992), pp. 280 – 307.

<sup>57</sup> Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’, p. 142.



direct contact with the outside world.’<sup>58</sup> This resonates with Lester Little’s assessment that through such a medium Damian was able to better control his personal relationships and maintain a crucial distance from other people.<sup>59</sup> Even the most recent scholarship, though sensitive to the contradictions in the evidence, holds that Damian resented ‘being brought back into the world from his life of solitude.’<sup>60</sup> The immediate objection to this might be that, as the letters form the mainstay of our evidence for Damian’s life,<sup>61</sup> it might be dangerous to read them as the dominant mode of social intercourse in his life as it was lived.

Needless to say, written communication did play a vital role in extending the range of Damian’s contact with men and women, both in Italy and beyond. Many of his letters are framed as responses to requests for his opinion or advice, usually on spiritual or interpretative matters.<sup>62</sup> What’s more, there are several examples of requests being passed on to Damian by a third party, as with the earliest of Damian’s extant letters, written to the ‘most illustrious man’ Honestus. It provides a prime example of how Damian’s religious and lay contacts intermingled, and how this helped spread his name and knowledge of his literary talents:

Dearest friend, you recently sent a word of request to us through our brother Leo, that I should write something for you to use to silence the Jews who often debate with you with reasoned arguments.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Jestice, ‘Peter Damian against the Reformers’, p. 87.

<sup>59</sup> Little, ‘The Personal Development of Peter Damian’, p. 340.

<sup>60</sup> Bannister, ‘“A monastic ark against the current flood”’, p. 223.

<sup>61</sup> Particularly since Reindel’s editions abolished the distinction between *opuscula* and *epistolae*.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, Letters 9, 58, 92, 96, 81 and 109.

<sup>63</sup> Blum 1, p. 38; “Dilectissime, deprecatoria nobis verba per fratrem nostrum Leonem nuper misisti, quatinus tibi aliquid scriberemus, quo saepe decertantium tibi Iudeorum ora rationabilibus argumentis obstruere” Reindel 1, p. 65. Where I have quoted directly from Blum’s translation I have cited

The letter implies an urban context, insofar as Honestus apparently has frequent contact with the Jews he hopes to best in argument, although where exactly Honestus lived and how he knew of Damian isn't clear. Damian did write to another Honestus some years later in Letter 27 (c. 1047 – 1054).<sup>64</sup> This man was a monk in Pomposa, which is around 30 miles north of Ravenna, Damian's home town. If they were the same man, and given how early in his career this was written, perhaps this is a contact from his former life.

There is also an extraordinary example of how ideas and contacts bounced around the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Damian's lifetime in Letter 91 (1062). In the letter, to Lichoudes, the patriarch of Constantinople, Damian prefaces his discussion of the 'Filioque' problem with a description of how he came to be writing to the Patriarch in the first place:

The devout bishop of the church of Forlimpopoli related to me that he had heard from the lips of the most reverend Dominic, patriarch of Grado, that you had posed a question of great importance to the Catholic faith in your letter to the Apostolic See, and that with vigilance becoming the episcopal office, you had requested of Pope Alexander that it be resolved with unimpeachable evidence from the testimonies of the Scriptures.<sup>65</sup>

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accordingly. Where I have adapted his work for a more historically sensitive translation, or I have retranslated from Reindel entirely, I have cited the quote as being adapted from Blum, as even in these cases his work was an invaluable guide.

<sup>64</sup> See Blum 1, p. 247, n. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Blum 5, p. 3; "Religiosus episcopus Popiliensis aecclisiae michi retulit, quoniam ex ore Dominici, reverentissimi patriarchae Gradensis, audivit, questionem vos catholicae fidei valde necessariam apostolicae sedi sacris insertam litteris destinasse, atque ut a sanctissimo papa Alexandro invictis

On the one hand this demonstrates the power of letters to bring people from across medieval Europe into contact with one another. But on the other hand, there were as many face-to-face encounters in these instances as there were written ones. Numerous letters can be seen to have grown out of conversations in person, and seem to have been written, at least in part, to create a permanent record of these encounters. In both Letter 67 and Letter 140 for example (dated to c. 1060 and 1066 respectively), it is clear that Damian met and conversed with Duke Godfrey of Tuscany on the weighty religious topics of the day. Letter 67 is typical in its refrain: ‘That, therefore, which I mentioned to you often in lively conversation, I now repeat by letter.’<sup>66</sup> Even a few years before his death – deep into the period designated as his retreat – variants on this theme appear in the letters.<sup>67</sup> He frequently visited urban areas, accompanying the Pope and other public figures, even after his retirement from the curia.<sup>68</sup> And on top of his duties as cardinal, Damian continued to oversee not only his community at Fonte Avellana, but a whole network of hermitages that he had crafted in the image of his interpretation of the Benedictine *Rule*.

#### Editors and Institutions:

The letters themselves contain a great deal of information on the process of authorship. Two letters shed light on the consultative editorial process that Damian’s writings were put through, and give particular insight into the way authorship was important for

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scripturarum testimoniis evidentissime solveretur, sacerdotalis officii vigilantia postulasse” Reindel 3, pp. 1 – 2.

<sup>66</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, p. 71; “Quod ergo vivis tibi sepe sermonibus protuli, hoc nunc per epistolam replico.” Reindel 2, p. 281.

<sup>67</sup> See Letter 157: “Quod ore ad os sepe praemonui, per litteras replico, et motum fugacis eloquii velut ad anchoram stacionis apicibus ligo” Reindel 4, p. 80.

<sup>68</sup> See Letter 109.

Damian himself. In 1059, Damian addressed a letter (Letter 62) to Bishop Theodosius of Senigallia and Bishop Rodulf of Gubbio.<sup>69</sup> In it, he requests that they carefully read through his writings, ‘And if anything is there contained that is contrary to the Catholic Faith, or that is opposed to the authority of sacred Scripture, delete it, if you see fit, or by correcting my opinion, bring it into line with sound doctrine.’<sup>70</sup> Likewise in Letter 116 (written c. 1064), the Abbots Gebizo and Tebald, and Damian’s disciple John of Lodi, are accorded this task of ‘correction’.<sup>71</sup> The existence of the second request suggests that these letters reflect actual practice – in 1064 Damian wrote, in a letter addressed to Alexander II, a short *vita* of Bishop Rodulf,<sup>72</sup> and it would seem that the death of his erstwhile editor may have occasioned his new requests in Letter 116.

Looking more closely at Letter 62 (1059), Damian presents his letters in characteristically humble style, although knowledge of his works’ standing still seeps through. What’s more, the following passage from Letter 62 is remarkably representative of the image of the letter-writing Damian in the current historiography:

Your holiness must be aware, my beloved fathers and lords, that I have undertaken to write several small works, not, indeed, that I might place them on the pulpits in the churches (which would be presumptuous) but especially because without some sort of occupation I could not bear the stagnant tranquillity and periods of tedium of a remote cell. As one who does not know how to sweat usefully at manual labour, I write that I might restrain

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<sup>69</sup> On Rodulf and his relationship with Damian, see Chapter 3, pp. 135 – 150.

<sup>70</sup> Blum 3, pp. 14 – 15; “Et si quid in his catholicis regule dissonum, si quid sacrarum scripturarum auctoritati reperitur adversum, prout visum fuerit, velm prorsus abscidite, vel ad sanum intellectum correctam sententiam revocate.” Reindel 2, p. 220

<sup>71</sup> It is not certain who exactly these abbots were.

<sup>72</sup> See Letter 109.

my wandering and lascivious heart with the leather strap of contemplation, the more easily to repulse the confusion of advancing thoughts and insistent spiritual listlessness.<sup>73</sup>

The text becomes an ‘act of pure cerebration performed in a monastery cell’.<sup>74</sup> But it is notable that here Damian presents writing as his escape not from the personal contact, but from the *tedium* and spiritual listlessness of the hermit’s cell. On the other hand this letter was written at the height of Damian’s tenure as cardinal-bishop of Ostia. His involvement in the religious politics of the curia was no small matter. In the same year as he wrote Letter 62, indeed, he was sent on perhaps his most celebrated mission as legate to Milan to negotiate between the local clergy and the Patarine reform movement.<sup>75</sup> Damian is reflecting on his authorial practice in a way that is revealing, but which also clearly minimises certain aspects of his life and emphasises others. The letter goes on to justify the editorial process thus:

Why should one wonder that I, an unskilled and carnal man, should employ holy men to judge my meagre dictation...?<sup>76</sup>

Just how many of the letters that are available to us passed through the hands of these bishops is unclear – Letter 62 gives absolutely no indication as to the identity of these

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<sup>73</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, p. 14; “Noverit sanctitas vestra, dilectissimi mihi patres et domini, quia praesumpsi quaedam opuscula scribere, non tam videlicet, ut legivis aecclesiasticis, quod temerarium fuerat, aliquid adderem, quam ob hoc praecipue, quia sine quolibet exercitio inertis ocii et remotioris cellulae tedia non perferrem, ut qui operibus manuum utiliter insudare non noveram, cor vagum atque lascivum quodam meditationis loro restringerem, sicque cogitationum ingruentium strepitum atque accidia obrepentis instantiam facilius propulsarem.” Reindel 2, p. 219.

<sup>74</sup> To borrow a phrase from Anthony Crossland, the use of which, incidently, shows something of the enduring power of the image. A. Crossland, *The Future of Socialism* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1964) p. 71.

<sup>75</sup> On which see H. E. J. Cowdrey, ‘The Papacy, The Patarines and the Church of Milan’ *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* fifth series 18 (1968), pp. 25 – 48.

<sup>76</sup> Blum 3, p. 15; “Quid enim mirum, si ego imperitus et animalis homo dictatiunculis meis sanctos viros adhibeam iudices” Reindel 2, p. 220.

‘little works’. We might reasonably suggest some of Damian’s heftier writings produced before 1059 (the *Life of St. Romuald*, *The Book of Gomorrah*, and the *Liber Gratissimus*, for example), but the matter cannot realistically go beyond the realm of conjecture. The vagueness of the letter is interesting in itself. The only other letter where such censors or editors are mentioned is Letter 116 in 1064. It looks in part like a simple like-for-like replacement for Letter 62. Bishops Rodulf and Theodosius were certainly dead by this point, and the existence of a renewed request arguably demonstrates that the employment of censors was genuinely followed through.

There are important differences, however. Quite unlike the indiscriminate request for censorship in Letter 62, in Letter 116 Damian requests a particular correction for a particular letter – Letter 115. In Letter 115 Damian had considered that John the Baptist must have been conceived on the last day of the feast of the tabernacles, and in Letter 116 sought to correct that statement. The request was made to two unidentifiable abbots and John of Lodi – at that time a hermit at Fonte Avellana. Everything points to the practical reality of the letter’s request. This makes the offending letter’s transmission curious, as it comes down to us incomplete and, it would seem, uncorrected, from two eleventh-century manuscripts based on Fonte Avellana material. By contrast, the request for editorial assistance comes down to us through material at Monte Cassino. The two eleventh-century manuscripts at Monte Cassino<sup>77</sup> are particularly interesting in so far as they provide some of the best evidence of Damian actively seeking a wider readership for his writing – and not only individual letters, but collections of his letters, works and poetry. The manuscripts were copied by Monte Cassino scribes sent by the abbot to Fonte Avellana at Damian’s request (although the request was fulfilled after

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<sup>77</sup> Montecassino, *Biblioteca dell'Abbazia*, Cod. 358; Cod. 359.

Damian's death).<sup>78</sup> The process by which the copied works were selected is unknown, and around thirty letters were omitted.<sup>79</sup> The manuscripts are well-thumbed, and it is known that monks from other institutions visited Monte Cassino to read and copy Damian's letters from there. If the Monte Cassino material represents works that from a very early date were being copied and read, and were thereby contributing to the earliest perceptions of Damian as an author, it seems significant that both Letters 62 and 116 appear in these manuscripts.

#### Action and Contemplation: Damian and Rodulf:

Letter 62 has a much larger presence in the manuscripts, and it is worth noting that one of the addressees is also particularly well known to us, through the writings of Damian himself. In 1064 Damian composed a short *vita* of Rodulf, praising his commitment to asceticism in the face of his promotion to being bishop of Gubbio. The *vita* is interesting in two ways. Firstly, it affirms the holiness of someone that Damian seems to have specifically sought, through the production and preservation of Letter 62, to associate with his Letters. Secondly, we can see the use of the monastic cell as a powerfully neutralising and sanctifying image, insofar as it drains the 'essence' of the man of its worldly contacts. Of Rodulf, Damian wrote:

He considered the church, moreover, to be his guest-house, while he thought the solitude of his cell to be his dwelling-place.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Bannister, "A monastic ark against the current flood", pp. 224 – 226.

<sup>79</sup> Reindel 1, p. 21.

<sup>80</sup> Blum 5, p. 209; "Aecclesiam porro deputabat hospicium, solitudinis autem cellulam habitaculum decernebat." Reindel 3, p. 205.

Even when performing that most worldly of ecclesiastical duties, fulfilling the obligations of episcopal office Rodulf is nevertheless *really*, that is to say *in his heart*, in his eremitic cell. The use of this spatial image, along with the other ascetic practices, is clearly important for the holiness, and authority, of Rodulf as he appears in Damian's *vita*. It was how, in Damian's words, he 'laudably observed the Rule as a monk, and in turn preserved his authority as a bishop.'<sup>81</sup> This is, in its appeal to the image-repertoire of eremitical solitude, very similar to the autobiographical account of letter-writing we saw in Letter 62.

#### The 'Beloved Solitude' of Fonte Avellana:

Whilst this analysis has been largely textual, it is nevertheless important to keep Damian's lived eremitism in mind. I do not mean to imply that Damian's eremitism was merely a 'rhetorical device', as clearly his experience of it was defined through ascetic practice and conditions of living. Ineke van't Spijker and Talal Asad have demonstrated the importance of the violent formation of the ascetic self. It was this violence (with particular reference to penitential pain) that, Asad argues, gave ascetics their special relationship with Truth.<sup>82</sup> Patricia McNulty, who translated some of Damian's spiritual writings in 1959, saw in what she read that the mortification of the flesh worked in tandem with discipline and prayer to form a 'ladder' to the contemplative state.<sup>83</sup> The important point for all these authors has been that this was

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<sup>81</sup> Blum 5, p. 210.

<sup>82</sup> T. Asad, 'Pain and Truth in Medieval Christian Ritual' in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, 1993), pp. 105 – 123. See also van't Spijker's chapter on Damian in her *Fictions of the inner life: religious literature and formation of the self in the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (Turnholt, 2004), pp. 19 – 58.

<sup>83</sup> McNulty, *St. Peter Damian*, pp. 33 – 47.



more than ascetic theory; it represents the power of ascetic practice to mould the will, and the individual's relationship with God and the community.

Fonte Avellana was Damian's 'desert', and its structures and location were a key part of how he constructed and practiced his separation from the world in day-to-day life. The hermitage possesses a powerful sense of isolation – Damian's 'beloved solitude' – and is tucked into a densely-wooded part of the Apennines in such a way that when approached by road from the south-west, it remains more-or-less out of sight until the visitor actually arrives at the gates. To reach Fonte Avellana from any direction means taking difficult mountain roads. There are several small villages within a 5-mile radius of the hermitage (they are further by road), but none are visible from the valley in which it sits. There is a real contrast between Fonte Avellana's situation (fig. 1) and that of a ceonobitic mountain monastery that Damian visited a number of times: Monte Cassino. The latter, perched atop its rocky outcrop, visible for miles around, proclaimed its separation *to* the world (fig. 2).<sup>84</sup> Fonte Avellana, on the other hand, except for those who actively visited it, must have remained a place that was talked about more than it was seen. Even as its regional reputation blossomed, it was nevertheless a place that was 'elsewhere', a presence unseen. In part, this very isolation necessitated contact with the world to sustain it. Fonte Avellana (literally 'Hazelnut Spring')<sup>85</sup> had some productive capacity and was able to sell unspecified goods at market, as we will see

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<sup>84</sup> Damian once referred to Monte Cassino as "the refuge of the ark" (Letter 86, 1061). Although, as so often, Damian was writing allegorically, the image of the ark, come to rest on the mountains of Ararat, is particularly apt.

<sup>85</sup> Giles Constable notes that many religious houses have references to rivers or springs in their names. Those that didn't were liable to run into trouble. See G. Constable, 'Controversy and Compromise in Religious Communities in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries' in J. Canning *et al* (eds.), *Knowledge, Discipline and Power in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of David Luscombe* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 146 – 147.

later in this thesis, but it also relied on trade and payments in kind from dependencies to support itself.

Many of the buildings that survive in Fonte Avellana were built in the twelfth century or later, which is a reflection of the importance of Damian's legacy to the hermitage, and the relative standing that the institution enjoyed after his death. Those buildings that remain from the late-tenth and eleventh centuries nevertheless communicate something of the spirit in which they were built and maintained. The original church survives, though a larger church was later built on top of it. Carved into the rock of the mountain itself, the small room has only two slit windows for light (fig. 3), which do not afford a view of the landscape (although the construction of the new church in the late twelfth century destroyed one side of the structure). This enclosed, inward-looking air is felt also in the irregular cloister (fig. 4), which more-or-less forms an 'L' shape, that Damian ordered built:

that if anyone is still delighted with the deep-rooted customs of the monastic order, he might have a place for the usual solemn processions on the principal feasts; and I also obtained a fine silver cross for processions there.<sup>86</sup>

This mention of the silver cross reminds us that, in the celebration of the liturgy, austerity had its limits. In the same letter (Letter 18, c. 1045 – 1050, addressed to the brothers at Fonte Avellana), he also recorded the acquisition of two 'finely gilded silver cups', 'remarkable altar coverings' and other 'precious ornaments'. Such acquisitions

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<sup>86</sup> Blum 1, p. 169; "ut, si quem adhuc inholita monasterialis ordinis consuetudo delectat, habeat, ubi in precipuis festivitibus solemniter ex more procedat, cui etiam processioni crucem argenteam satis idoneam procuravimus." Reindel 1, p. 178.

implicitly speak of the negotiations with ‘the world’ that were necessary for Damian as head of his community. What forms the central concern for this thesis is the forms such connections took for Damian, not only as a hermit, but as a cardinal-bishop, and more generally as a man with a certain professional background in a certain part of Italy.

We have seen that the self-reflective passages in Damian’s letters tended to emphasise his ascetic activities whilst presenting his other activities as secondary. The ‘retreat to the hermitage’ forms an important element of the power of Damian’s texts, the effect of which has stretched to the present day. This matter is further complicated by Damian’s reflections on his own activities as an author, of which Letters 62 and 116 are rich examples. On the one hand they place a barrier of editorial revisions between the historian and the author. On the other hand there is no escaping that these are representations of his writing composed and preserved by Damian himself. In presenting the eremitic lives of both himself and Rodulf in this way, Damian touched upon, and perhaps transcends, one of the great problems of his writings, and indeed of the new eremitic movement in general: that of defining the contemplative life in contradistinction to the active life.<sup>87</sup> In his letter to Rodulf and Theodosius, Damian did not feel compelled to make any reference at all to what might be considered his active life. Rather, the letters were positioned purely as the products of eremitic hardship. With Rodulf’s *Vita* the situation was more complicated, as Damian did not disavow the bishop’s worldly power. Rather, he stressed the centrality of contemplation; made it Rodulf’s primary form of life, from which he drew his power for his active role. The secluded nature of Fonte Avellana introduces the problem of Damian’s methods of communicating his ascetic life, and projecting the social power that it granted him, to

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<sup>87</sup> On this division, which was hardly a novelty in the eleventh century, see R. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge, 1997).

the wider world. In the last few decades, the study of holy men and women has made great strides in placing these extraordinary individuals in their broader, collective contexts. I hope, with this thesis, to contribute to the understanding of Damian as a social, this-worldly actor in the dynamic context of eleventh-century northern and central Italy.



fig 1. Fonte Avellana, looking south-east.



fig 2. Monte Cassino



fig 3. The tenth-century church and altar    fig 4. The cloister



## Chapter One: Damian, Ravenna and Urban Cultures

Cities represented a particular problem for northern Italian ascetics in the age of Peter Damian. Conrad Leyser has argued that the urban revival of the eleventh century, and the intensified aristocratic exploitation of land and its surpluses that drove it, created many of the anxieties that appeared in reformist literature as ‘pollution complexes’ (in Remensnyder’s words, following Moore following Douglas). This development rendered the ‘semiotics of purity’ (Leyser again) in the monastic and clerical professions insufficient, and fed the hunt for a new method of measuring and understanding purity.<sup>88</sup> The city, moreover, was itself a manifestation of moral ambiguity, a “comingling of flawed and less flawed citizens”,<sup>89</sup> a place of contact, of influence and moral differentiation. Correspondingly, a great deal of Damian’s eremitic rhetoric rested on the contradistinction between the ‘desert’ and the ‘city’. This was, of course, an ancient image repertoire, but it took on a particular significance in the work of Peter Damian, surrounded by the unusually city-focussed northern and central Italian society, and the urban educational culture, of which he was a product. Raised in Ravenna and educated in Parma and Faenza, Damian continued to be influenced by these links in word and deed throughout his life. In his letters he quarrelled with his former peers in a broad rhetorical sense, but also over specific issues such as consanguinity. Equally, though, from his literary and poetic achievements, and the manner of his contact with the potentates (both lay and ecclesiastical) of northern and central Italy, we can see that the distinction between Damian and other Italian scholars

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<sup>88</sup> Leyser, ‘Cities of the Plain’, pp. 191 – 211; He suggests that the *Liber Gomorrhianus* was a product of Damian’s need for a new ‘site’ in which to define the absolutes of purity and its measurement now that the Cluniac model had become problematised by rising land value and competition.

<sup>89</sup> Leyser, ‘Cities of the Plain’ p. 211.

was not as definite as he liked to suggest. How, then, did Damian relate to northern Italian urban cultures, and what complications or problems arose?

### Peter Damian and Ravenna

Damian's early letters reveal that he was in continual contact with important ecclesiastical and monastic figures in and around Ravenna during the 1040s. Hans Peter Laqua has emphasised the central importance of Ravenna as a context for understanding Damian's development as a reformer. As well as Damian's role advising the Archbishops of Ravenna and the abbots of Pomposa, St. Apollinaris in Classe and St. Vincent at Furlo Pass, Laqua pointed to the number of his writings that took the local saints of Ravenna as their subject: the most prominent was his *Vita Beati Romualdi* (who is commonly known as Romuald of Ravenna), but there were also sermons on the ancient archbishops of Ravenna, SS. Apollinaris, Eleuchadius (first century) and Severus (fourth century).<sup>90</sup> The local urban context was also emphasised in his sermon on St. Vitalis of Milan, who was probably killed in the first century in "the brilliant city of Ravenna, clothed in purple by the precious blood of so many martyrs", recognising, at the same time, the city's imperial pedigree.<sup>91</sup>

And Ravenna was, of course, not just any city: it had been Damian's childhood home, and after some years spent studying at Parma and Faenza, John of Lodi suggests that he

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<sup>90</sup> H. Laqua, *Traditionen und Leitbilder be idem Ravennater Reformer Petrus Damiani 1042 – 1052* (Munich, 1976), esp. pp. 27 – 37; for his sermons on St. Severus, see also D. Elliot, *Fallen Bodies* pp. 81 – 106, reprinted as 'The Priest's Wife: Female Erasure in the Gregorian Reform' in C. Hoffman Berman (ed.) *Medieval Religion: New Approaches* (London, 2004) pp. 123 – 155. For the sermons themselves see Lucchesi, *Sermones* (Turnholt, 1983): St. Severus is the subject of sermons 4 and 5, St. Eleuchadius 6, and St. Apollinaris 30, 31 and 32. On the importance of this aspect of Damian's life generally, see R. Osborn, *The Preaching of St. Peter Damian* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Butler University, 1955).

<sup>91</sup> "[Gaude igitur], Rauenna urbs clarissima, tantorum martyrum pretioso sanguine purpurata!" Lucchesi, *Sermones* XVII.I p. 90. A portion of the sermon is also translated in d'Avray, 'Consanguinity', pp. 73 – 74. See also Laqua, *Traditionen und Leitbilder*, pp. 147 – 156.

had returned there to teach until his conversion. The family connection is not something that Damian chose to emphasise in his letters. Lester Little (and others who have considered Damian's attitude towards 'the family' more generally) laid particular emphasis on Damian's difficult family relations,<sup>92</sup> and saw them as paradigmatic of his withdrawal from the world generally. He was certainly raised by his siblings after his parents' early death, but, as we have seen, we are overly reliant on John of Lodi's *Vita* for the details. Whilst the psychological effects of Damian's early years have perhaps been overemphasised given the paucity of evidence, in none of the extant letters does Damian write to a family member on any topic other than their spiritual life. In this sense, although we might suppose that Damian's frequent presence in Ravenna might have occasioned some kind of contact, his family do not represent a documented bridge between Damian and 'the world'.<sup>93</sup>

There are no letters, for example, that show Damian interacting with his sisters, Rodelinda and Sufficia, whilst they were married. But in the early 1060s he wrote to them following the deaths of their husbands to congratulate them on taking up the spiritual life. Tainted by married life, they were "unable to follow after the Lamb as virgins wherever he went",<sup>94</sup> but Damian nevertheless commended their commitment to a life of patient suffering. Rodelinda was certainly older than Damian, as he testifies

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<sup>92</sup> Little, 'The Personal Development of Peter Damian' pp. 317 – 341. Actually it is difficult to say anything concrete about Damian's family background, save that they lived in Ravenna, as John of Lodi's *Vita* is clearly of questionable use on early details, conflicting with what little there is in Damian's letters. It is not clear what his parents did. His elder brother Damianus was an archpriest in Ravenna before becoming a monk.

<sup>93</sup> Such bridges were, after all, specifically forbidden by the Benedictine Rule. See, for example, chapter 54 where the monks are forbidden to exchange letters or gifts with their parents. For more on this rule, see Chapter 3, pp. 172 – 174.

<sup>94</sup> "Etsi enim agnum non valetis sequi quocumque ierit tamquam virgines" Reindel 3, p. 32; "Though you are unable to follow after the Lamb as virgins whithersoever he may go" adapted from Blum 5, pp. 34 – 35.



that she had a hand in raising him,<sup>95</sup> but we know nothing more of Sufficia. Given that Damian's parents, according to John of Lodi, passed away shortly after his birth, then both sisters must have been around his age or older, which would make them over 50, and perhaps around 60 at the time this letter was composed. Damian tries to persuade Rodelinda and Sufficia to bear their remaining years without remarrying, and Damian cites scriptural precedents to this effect.<sup>96</sup> He mostly restricts himself to spiritual advice, and the difficulties of remaining separated from 'the world':

I have certainly learnt and have sufficiently, and more, experienced that the farther from the affairs of the world or from secular associations you withdraw, the more difficult it is for you to strive against the distressing clatter of assailing thoughts.<sup>97</sup>

His family home appeared in his letters as a source of tension rather than comfort, and was presented as something from his former life, something that he sought separation from. Much later in his life, writing to the Empress Agnes in 1067 (Letter 149) to convince her to leave the trappings of the royal court in Germany, Damian acknowledged his former secular life, but was quick to add that:

no one could ever persuade me even to walk past the house where I was born, except only once someone wrote to me, I know not why, that late one night I should walk down the street and pass the door. A second time also, I

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<sup>95</sup> See letter 149, to the Empress Agnes.

<sup>96</sup> He focuses particularly on the example of Anna, Luke 2:36 – 38; compare this with his letters to the Countesses Beatrice and Adelaide, where remarriage was, of not encouraged, nonetheless accepted as politically expedient. See Chapter 2, pp. 116 – 126.

<sup>97</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, p. 36; "Novi sane et satis superque expertus sum, quia quo remotius a mundi negociis vel saeculari conversatione seceditis, eo molestius importuno cogitationum ingruentium strepitu laboratis." Reindel 3, p. 34.

was compelled to visit my elder sister of blessed memory, who had been a second mother to me, and was then desperately ill. But then, I admit, such a dim mist of modesty dulled my vision, that as I was in the house, I saw hardly anything of the domestic life that went on within.<sup>98</sup>

The context of this letter – Damian’s attempts to usher the empress away from family life, and from power – will be explored in the final chapter of this thesis, but if he was not often a visitor of his family home, he nevertheless spent significant periods of time in and around Ravenna during the early years of his religious career.

There was a great deal of contact between Damian, the Archbishops of Ravenna and the major monastic houses of the region. During the eleventh century these archbishops were overwhelmingly appointments from north of the Alps, and the metropolitan can be seen as very much a part of the *Reichskirche* under both Conrad II and Henry III. The first record we have of Damian’s interaction with the archbishops is a letter (Letter 3, 1043) that he wrote to Archbishop Gebhard (d. 1044), shortly after he had become prior of Fonte Avellana. Gebhard had formerly been a canon of the cathedral in Eichstätt (in Bavaria), and had been promoted by Conrad II.<sup>99</sup> Although it is a short letter, it has plenty to say about Damian and what he called “the second see of Italy”. His reason for writing was that he had been asked to visit Gebhard in Ravenna, a request he refused:

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<sup>98</sup> Adapted from Blum 6, p. 178; “Nec unquam michi persuadere quis potuit, ut vel ante domum quidem ex qua prodideram properus viator incederem, nisi semel tantum michi nescio quo pacto scriptum est, ut ante ianuam illam via publica intempesta iam nocte transirem. Secundo quoque compulsus sum, ut primogenitam michi sanctae vitae germanam, quae me vice matris aluerat, et tunc egerrima decumbebat, inviserem. Set tunc fateor oculos meos tanta caligo verecundi pudoris obduxit, ut cum intra domum consisterem, domestica vix viderem.” Reindel 3, p. 552.

<sup>99</sup> See the entry for Gebhard in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* Vol. 52 (1999), pp. 792 – 795, and Laqua, *Traditionen* pp. 113 – 118.

You have ordered me to visit you, beloved father and lord, and your order is my command. But after assuming the direction of this poor little place [Fonte Avellana], while previously a poor man in my own person alone, I have now become poorer still according to the number of those whose direction I have undertaken...Wherefore, while caring for the needs of my brothers, I could not readily visit you.<sup>100</sup>

It is not made clear what kind of advice Gebhard hoped to get from having Damian visit,<sup>101</sup> but there appears to have been a certain amount of crossover between the reform of the regional church and the reform of the local monasteries. Damian praised Gebhard's fight against the *symoniacus draco*,<sup>102</sup> and continued:

But amongst all the endeavours of your holiness this especially is dear to me that you keep a shepherd's watch on the welfare of the monks and do not cease to reveal their long-concealed ills or to cut them away with the surgery of discipline.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Blum 1, pp. 87 – 88; “Praecepisti mihi, dilectissime pater et domine, et praecipiendo mandasti, ut ad te venirem, sed ego pauperculum locum ad regendum suscipiens, qui prius per memetipsum solummodo pauper extiti, nunc per tot pauper effectus sum, quot regendos accaepi... Quapropter dum fratrum necessitati consului, ad vos facile venire non potui” Reindel 1, pp. 106 – 107; whilst Damian was involved with a number of monastic institutions at this point, the fact that he refers to himself in this letter as “Peter, last servant of the hermits” suggests that he is referring to Fonte Avellana rather than the coenobitic houses of Pomposa, St. Apollinaris in Classe or St. Vincent at Furlo Pass. Fonte Avellana was also much further away from Ravenna than the other houses, making his disinclination to travel more understandable.

<sup>101</sup> For the suggestion that he was seeking Damian's advice rather than simply a recognition of his authority, see Letter 7, discussed presently below.

<sup>102</sup> Which suggests that this was a priority for Damian before he became involved with the circle of reformers centred on Rome.

<sup>103</sup> Blum 1, pp. 88 – 89; “Sed inter haec omnia vestrae sanctitatis studia illud mihi multo est carius, quod salutis monachorum pastoralis oculus vester invigilat et occulta diu vulnera in lucem producere et disciplinae cyrurgio secare non cessat” Reindel 1, pp. 107 - 108.

This would seem to confirm Laqua's picture of an active reform movement around Ravenna, and it seems to have had as much to do with the consolidation of archiepiscopal power as with piety. Damian was in contact with both the ecclesiastical and the monastic sides of the activity, which were themselves deeply intertwined. He was invited to Pomposa and St. Vincent at Furlo Pass to aid in the reform of their routine and to speak on spiritual matters, and was to be given a similar role at St. Apollinaris in Classe by Gebhard's successor.<sup>104</sup> Gebhard himself protected and expanded Pomposa, which had links with Camaldoli but was also under the archbishopric's jurisdiction, and Gebhard was eventually laid to rest at Pomposa.<sup>105</sup> He likewise enriched the other monasteries in his territories. That between 1040 and 1043 Damian was invited to give advice by both Gebhard and Guido, the abbot of Pomposa, was not a coincidence, and this also reflects the nature of the archbishop's power, reliant on a diverse portfolio of ecclesiastical, monastic and castled estates around the region of the former exarchate.<sup>106</sup> If Damian's styling of Fonte Avellana as 'this poor little place' was intended to prod the archbishop to show the hermitage the favour of economic assistance, it does not appear to have been successful.

Within a year of this letter, Gebhard was dead,<sup>107</sup> but Damian's involvement with Ravenna and its archbishops continued with the investiture of another imperial

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<sup>104</sup> His role at Pomposa and St. Vincent is mentioned in John of Lodi's *Vita*, and confirmed by Letters 6 and 142 respectively. For more detail see Chapter 2, pp. 127 - 134, as his activity also brought him into contact with the Margrave of Tuscany. For St. Apollinaris, see below.

<sup>105</sup> *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 52, pp. 792 – 795.

<sup>106</sup> See G. Tabacco, 'Northern and Central Italy in the Eleventh Century' in D. Luscombe and J. Riley-Smith (eds.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Volume IV - c. 1024-c. 1198* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 72 – 93; pp. 80 – 81.

<sup>107</sup> Laqua did consider another letter – Letter 4 – to have been addressed to Gebhard (op. cit. pp. 54 – 64), but more recent historiography has questioned this assertion because whilst the early editions of Gaetani and Migne recorded the addressee as 'G', the manuscripts have "Domno 'L', reverentissimo archiepiscopo" which could, according to Lucchesi, be Archbishop Lawrence of Amalfi, and Reindel and Blum have accepted this reading (see Reindel 1, p. 109, n. 1 and Blum 1, p. 90, n. 2). The letter nevertheless deals with regional concerns, and asks that the bishops of Fano and Pesaro (costal towns to

appointment of a German cleric: Widger. The letters Damian wrote during the new archbishop's short episcopate (1044 – 1046) give a fuller picture of the nature of his associations in Ravenna, principally because his relationship with Widger did not meet his expectations, and this gave him cause to voice what those expectations were. In the winter of 1044 – 1045, Damian was invited to Ravenna at the request of the new archbishop, apparently to provide the new prelate with advice on ecclesiastical matters. Ultimately Damian appears to have deemed his time in the city to have been unsuccessful. He complained to the archbishop in Letter 7 (written shortly before Christmas 1044) that:

I marvel somewhat that after visiting you [Widger], after my obedient presence at your bidding (when I was called back from another journey), I was not deemed worthy to hear anything further of the mission nor to receive a single indication of your friendship. Certainly, there are several witnesses of this matter of which I speak, namely that if I had been willing to comply with your predecessor of blessed memory and had taken up residence there, he would have confirmed, as he promised, that he would accept my advice, both concerning the good of his own soul and also regulations on spiritual matters. But you, on the contrary, daily lash me, daily afflict me with biting blows of the scourge; and he who does not deserve to hear a harsh word, receives the discipline at your sacred hands.<sup>108</sup>

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the south of Ravenna) should be reported to the pope for undisclosed crimes. The letter also asks that the addressee receive the abbot of St. Appolinaris in Damian's stead, and so may have been written as a letter of introduction.

<sup>108</sup> Blum I, p. 98; "Verumtamen satis miror, venerabilis pater, quia postquam ad te veni, postquam ab alio revocatus itinere vestries iussionibus parui, nullum legacionis verbum, nullum suscipere merui vestrae familiaritatis indicium. Certe nonnulli testes sunt huius rei, quam loquor, quia si bonae memoriae decessori vestro hic habitandi gratia optemperare voluissem, acquieturum se nostris consiliis et de spiritualium rerum ordinacionibus rata promissione firmaret. Vos autem e diverso me cotidie flagellatis,

He repeated his anger at being ignored by the archbishop in Letter 8 (1045), addressed to a certain ‘G’, a priest in Ravenna who held the unusual title of “*arcae Sethim cymiarcha*”.<sup>109</sup>

Dear sir, you are not unaware that I was often importuned years ago by Archbishop Gebhard,<sup>110</sup> and more recently by the new archbishop who was installed because of zeal for the spirit of God, and also by many citizens of Ravenna, and that finally I consented to leave the hermitage and come to live in the city with the hope of saving souls. But when I saw this man [Widger] accomplishing not what he was sent to do, but rather, what he was permitted to do, and that the people had neither the zeal of charity for me nor a concern for their own salvation, I suffered regret, I confess, that I realised clearly if belatedly, that while I trusted in human vanity I had strayed from the track of God’s will. For while eagerly fishing in a well-stocked pool, I frustratedly lost those few I used to catch in the broad waters of the sea.<sup>111</sup>

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*cotidie acres verberum plagas infligitis, et qui audire non meretur linguam gravem, de sacris minibus suscipit disciplinam.*” Reindel 1, p. 116.

<sup>109</sup> Blum translates this as ‘treasurer of the Ark of acacia-wood’ (cf. Exod. 25: 10 “Frame an ark of setim wood...”), with ‘*cymiarcha*’ being taken as a shortened form of ‘*cimiliarcha*’, a late antique term for the keeper of an archbishop’s most important relics and liturgical instruments. Although ‘*cimilarcha*’ can be found elsewhere, it would seem “*arcae Sethim cymiarcha*” was an office peculiar to Ravenna. See Blum 1, p. 100, n. 2. It is unclear whether a particular closeness to the archbishop was maintained as a feature of the office.

<sup>110</sup> Damian refused Gebhard’s requests. See Letter 3.

<sup>111</sup> Blum 1, pp. 100 – 101; “Non ignoras, dilectissime, quia et olim a Geboardo archiepiscopo et nuper ab hoc novo, qui zelo divini Spiritus constitutus est, necnon et a plerisque Ravennae civibus sepe multumque rogatus tandem consensi, et heremum deserens spe lucrandi animas urbem habitaturus adveni. Sed cum praedictum virum cernerem, non dicam ad quod missus, sed quod permissus fuerat agere, populum quoque non in me caritatis zelum, non in se studium proprie salutis habere paenituit, fateor, quia dum vanitatibus hominum credidi, a divinae voluntatis linea licet sero perspicue tamen me oberrasse cognovi, et dum congestorum aviditate piscium vivarium petii, raros saltem, quos per diffusa marium fluentia claudere consueveram, frustrates amisi.” Reindel 1, pp. 118 – 119.

Perhaps this represents the importance of local ecclesiastical offices as a counter-balance to the imported German and imperial connections of the archbishops themselves, although without being able to say more about ‘G’ this can only be speculation. In any case, this letter saw Damian extrapolate from his concerns about Ravenna to a more general consideration of whether it is better to secure one’s own salvation through solitary pursuit of the contemplative life, or to risk public honour and harvest the souls of others. His answer is on the surface quite straight forward:

...a prudent man should on the one hand outwardly accept an honour offered to him for the welfare of his brethren; but on the other, in his humility should inwardly despise the same honour, so that having surveyed [the risks] on every side he may provide for the salvation of others yet in such a way that he himself does not fall victim to the vice of pride.<sup>112</sup>

The solution lies in the inward attitude towards public adulation: the rich fiction of the inner life provided an alibi for the external realities of his social position. Here it is also important to note that Damian recorded that it was not only the archbishop, but ‘many citizens of Ravenna’ that apparently asked for his presence in the city.

It is unclear exactly who these *cives* were, and it was a term that Damian used in an equally unenlightening fashion in his letter regarding the Milanese Patarenes. In his accounts of his visits to Ravenna in this period there was no mention of his family, still less mysterious solicitations of an anonymous letter-writer, as recorded in his letter to the Empress Agnes. Nor was his stay as wholly unproductive as letters 7 and 8 lead us

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<sup>112</sup> Blum 1, pp. 107 – 108; “...ut discretus vir et honorem sibi delatum exterius pro fratrum utilitate suscipiat et eundem honorem intrinsecus pro sua humilitate contempnat, quatinus undique circumspectus sic illorum saluti provideat, ut ipse tamen elationis vitio non succumbat.” Reindel 1, p. 124.

to believe, as his presence in the archbishop's residence brought him into contact with other local men of note. In 1045 (or, at the latest, 1046) Damian wrote Letter 17 to an unidentified nobleman 'T.', to give him advice on the recital of the canonical hours by laymen such as him. Lucchesi<sup>113</sup> made a case for the nobleman being Tetgrimus of the Guidi family – a family with whom Damian had a rather up and down relationship<sup>114</sup> – but the evidence is far from concrete. Whether he had Guidi family ties or not, Damian recounts that he met him at the archbishop's palace:

While speaking with you in the bishop's residence in Ravenna, my dear friend, I suggested to you a number of rules of life and exhorted you a bit to religious devotion. Finally our conversation came round to this, that I asserted that the canonical office, consisting of seven hours, should be performed by all Christian faithful as a daily task of service to God. But I decided that it was necessary to put down in writing what then we spoke about, so that what you heard as simply passing speech might not easily slip away, but might remain more firmly in your memory if placed before you in written form.<sup>115</sup>

Whilst the archbishop may have ignored Damian's presence, the palace was nevertheless a place of contact for Damian with members of the lay elite as well as

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<sup>113</sup> See Blum 1, p. 145, n. 2.

<sup>114</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 161 - 168. This relationship is recorded in Letters 14 and 63, and a charter from 1060, Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana* 1, pp. 36 – 39. See also L. Eckenstein, 'The Guidi and their relations with Florence' *English Historical Review* XIV: LIV (1899), pp. 235-249.

<sup>115</sup> Blum 1, pp. 145 – 146; "Dum tecum, dilectissime, in episcopali Ravennae palatio colloquens nonnulla tibi vivendi praecepta suggererem atque ad religionis studium qui busdam te exhortatiunculis provocarem, tandem ad hoc processit oratio, ut assererem canonica septem horarum officia ab omnibus Christianis fidelibus Deo cotidie quasi quoddam servitutis pensum debere persolvi. Sed quod tunc lingua decurrente prolutum est, apicibus tradere necessarium duxi, ne quod ad momentum simplicibus verbis audisti, facilius excidat, sed subiectum oculis per stili currentis articulum memoriae tenacius inhaerescat." Reindel 1, p. 156. This letter also reveals the high level of literacy amongst the laity, seen also in Letter 1 to the nobleman Hontestus.



ecclesiastical and monastic leaders. It was also in Ravenna, though not necessarily in the archbishop's residence, that Damian took part in a debate with the *sapientes civitatis* regarding the definition of the degrees of consanguinity.<sup>116</sup> There was clearly heterogeneity to his contacts in Ravenna, and it complicated the notion of his separation from the 'world', to the extent that Damian had to tackle the problem head-on, as in Letter 8.

The archbishop did not completely ignore Damian's presence in Ravenna. As with the letter to Widger's predecessor, Letter 7 also turns to the topic of the region's monasteries, and the archbishop's duties towards them. The archbishop had asked Damian to administer one particular monastery – possibly St. Apollinaris in Classe – and once again this demonstrates the integration of the archiepiscopate and its dependent monastic houses, and the pragmatic priorities that this foisted on Damian:

It is obvious, my gentle lord, that all the other monasteries stand unharmed under your merciful patronage and continue to serve God with security and immunity from harm. This house alone, from the moment you commanded me to take over its possession, has suffered such an attack and depredation, that unless you immediately show an inclination to mercy on its behalf, it seems that it is doomed to total destruction...Do not continue to oppress this holy place by taking its income, since you are aware that it has already suffered enough loss of its ecclesiastical property.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> The term 'sapientes civitatis', almost as vague as 'cives', appears in Letter 19. See below.

<sup>117</sup> Blum 1, pp. 98 – 99; "Ecce, clementissime domine, caetera monasteria sub alis misericordiae vestrae inlaesa persistunt et cum securitate et immunitate Deo deserviunt. Hoc autem solum ex quo me in illud ingredi praecepistis, tot patet invasionibus et rapinis obnoxium, ut nisi mens vestra vel nunc flectatur ad misericordiam, iam videatur funditus desolatum...Nec gravetis sanctum locum adhuc auferendo percuniam, quem tantum aecclesiasticarum rerum nostis iam pertulisse iacturam." Reindel 1, p. 117.

Damian was getting involved, in the earliest years of his religious career, in the complex politics of ecclesiastical land – perhaps Widger had misunderstood Damian’s drive for apostolic poverty. Laqua emphasised the contrast between Gebhard and his successors as the key motivation for Damian’s gradual gravitation towards Rome.<sup>118</sup> Widger was the first of three German archbishops Henry III appointed after the death of Gebhard. Widger was removed by Henry III in 1046, and there is no evidence for Damian having contact with his replacement Archbishop Hunfred (1046 – 1051).<sup>119</sup> After Hunfred was killed in 1051, care of the see was handed to Henry, who held it until 1072 (the same year that Damian died, coincidently on a mission to negotiate the re-admittance of the then excommunicated archbishop back into communion). Damian, who wrote to the Emperor to praise him for removing Widger in Letter 20 (1046), appears to have initially enjoyed the kind of relationship with his successor Henry that he had sought in 1044 with Widger. As a mark of his regard (or, perhaps, an attempt to reignite the episcopate-driven Ravennate reform), in 1052 Damian had addressed his *Liber Gratissimus* to the recently promoted Henry:

Wherefore, my dear friend, I offer you this piece, composed in inelegant and unskilled style like fruit of low account, and ask that you not despise my gift, for rustic ways have produced no better. Since, indeed, if I may put it so, you have risen to the highest position in the place where I was born, I have sought you out especially as the recipient of my little gift, that this

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<sup>118</sup> Laqua, *Traditionen und Leitbilder* pp. 110 – 118.

<sup>119</sup> Though like Widger and Henry, Hunfred was a German appointment from the imperial chancery.

skinny little lost sheep might offer his shepherd the offspring, not of the womb but of the mind.<sup>120</sup>

Aside from being a prime example of Damian's rhetoric of the 'rustic', this reference to Ravenna as his home town made it clear to the newcomer Henry that Damian still considered himself a man of local importance. If such a dedication could have been made out of hope, or blind faith, Letter 58 (1058) reveals more of a reciprocal relationship, as it is a reply to Henry's request for Damian's opinion of the rival Popes Nicholas II and Benedict X, and his thoughts on the state of the curia.<sup>121</sup> Damian came down firmly on the side of Nicholas II, dismissing Benedict as a simoniac. By the time of this letter Damian had been promoted to the position of cardinal-bishop of Ostia (though he still presents himself as *Petrus peccator monachus*), which explains the far greater focus on episcopal and pontifical matters than in his earlier letters to archbishops of Ravenna. Perhaps the greatest difference was that in 1058 Damian was communicating with the archbishop, so far as the evidence shows, primarily by letter. This is not to say that they did not meet face to face, or that the letter's existence is sufficient evidence for the lack of other forms of contact. But unlike the other letters I have looked at in this section, the text is pointedly framed by references to an epistolary back-and-forth. The phrasing also hints at further interaction, the record of which is now lost:

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<sup>120</sup> Adapted from Blum 2, p. 212; "Quapropter, karissime, haec rustica ac rudi stilo composita tuis manibus offero, tanquam videlicet vilia poma, quia tamen rus meliora non attulit, ne despicias, quaeso. Plane quia, ut ita loquar, unde genus duxi, summum conscendis honorem, te potissimum elegi, cui hoc munusculum traderem et ut revera proprio pastori perexilis ovicula fructum non ventris sed mentis afferrem." Reindel 1, p. 507.

<sup>121</sup> There is also the fragment of a letter, preserved in John of Lodi's *Collectanea* (Letter 41) that was apparently addressed to Archbishop Henry. All that remains is Damian's insistence that grape juice is as good as wine in the Mass. Perhaps this is an indication of the kind of advice Damian volunteered to those in Ravenna.

As soon as I saw the letter bearing the seal of your holiness, venerable father, I promptly took it in hand, opened it with pleasure, and read it with much interest. Therein I at once clearly learned of your kindly and paternal affection for me, and the assured promise regarding the request that I had previously laid before you.<sup>122</sup>

Damian asked for his reply to be made public,<sup>123</sup> and ended the letter:

I will say nothing further, venerable father, concerning your blessing which I requested, except that whatever is given to my messenger, be placed in the hands of him who sent him.<sup>124</sup>

However, in an addendum to the *Liber*, written in 1062, it seems that Damian had once again become disappointed with the Archbishop of Ravenna:

Furthermore, the bishop of Ravenna [Henry], to whom this book was first sent, because he had been recently promoted and was therefore unknown to me, was thought to be proficient in scriptural theology. But since I am unable to elicit from him even the slightest spark of a solution [scintillam solutionis] in this matter, I decided to be satisfied with the authority of the Apostolic See, so that whatever should be prescribed by its synodal

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<sup>122</sup> Blum 2, p. 390; “Litteras sigillo vestrae sanctitatis impressas, venerabilis pater, mox ut aspexi, promptus arripui, laetus explicui, curiose perlegi. In quibus nimirum liquido comperi et paternum circa me vestrae pietatis affectum et certum de ea, quam vobis ante suggesseram, mea petitione promissum.” Reindel 2, p. 191. Perhaps this letter was preserved over others between these men because it expounded an argument on a particular point of canonical principle, namely that Damian did not believe that the archpriest should run the diocese of Ostia in his absence.

<sup>123</sup> See Blum 2, pp. 390 – 393; Reindel 2, pp. 190 – 194.

<sup>124</sup> Blum 2, p. 392; “De benedictione autem vestra, quam petii, venerande pater, nichil aliud dico, nisi quia quicquid ei, qui missus est, datur, eius proculdubio manibus, qui misit, inmittitur.” Reindel 2, p. 194.

judgement would for me be certainly authentic, and would clearly appear to be supported by the vigorous authority of the canons.<sup>125</sup>

If Damian was truly deflated by Henry's lack of response, was the problem a lack of common academic courtesy? In the 1060s and 1070s Henry would make himself a firm enemy of those in Roman reform circles by supporting Cadalus, and falling into dispute with Abbot Mainard of Pomposa.<sup>126</sup> The addendum to the *Liber Gratissimus* may reflect these changes, and perhaps Henry was no longer a useful name to have attached to the book. It seems, moreover, that Damian had become less intertwined with the social milieu around Ravenna by this point, and his letters become increasingly dominated by people and events in Tuscan and Rome.

Despite the loosening of these ties, Damian seems to have remained in the mind of at least one of his Ravennate contacts – the abbot of St. Apollinaris in Classe. There is a short but intriguing letter that Damian wrote after his promotion to cardinal in 1057 to two unidentified Roman priests.

I would not have you ignorant, my most dear brothers and lords, that this modern Jacob [the abbot was lame], namely the abbot [*rector* – 'governor?'] of St. Apollinaris, managed to climb to our mountaintop. And what is more, this man who is accustomed to move slowly in level and unobstructed valleys, spurred on by fear and propelled as it were by wings [an allusion to

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<sup>125</sup> Blum 2, p. 214; "Porro autem Ravennas ille episcopus, cui libellus hic principio missus est, quia nuper promotus atque ideo mihi erat incognitus, scripturarum habere scientiam putabatur. Sed quoniam ab eo super hac questione ne tenuem quidem scintillam solutionis exculpere potui, auctoritate sedis apostolicae me contentum esse decrevi, ut quicquid eius synodali fuerit censura praefixum, hoc mihi proculdubio sit autenticum, hoc certe canonicae videatur auctoritatis vigore subnixum." Reindel 1, p. 509.

<sup>126</sup> C. Frison 'Enrico' in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* Vol. 42 (1993), pp. 706 – 709.

a line in the *Aeneid*], was determined with all haste to fly up the rocky walls of the mountains.<sup>127</sup>

Damian asks the priests to give him compassion (*misericordia*), rather than gold and silver “so that he needs not fear the ruin of his place or the destruction of his home.”<sup>128</sup> The man from St. Apollinaris seems to have come to visit Damian at Fonte Avellana in the hope of support for his institution which, as we saw earlier, had been stripped of property by the archbishop in the mid 1040s. If this is the case, Damian’s response seems to have been rather weak, although without knowing more about the clerics to whom it was sent it is impossible to tell if Damian was passing the monastery’s problems along to some well connected and influential Roman notables or simply asking for the prayers of two relatively undistinguished men. But this passage also contains two important, and divergent pillars of Damian’s approach to the social world – the allusion to the *Aeneid*, and the image of ‘our mountain’, Fonte Avellana. That is to say, his deep liberal knowledge and his self-image as the distant hermit sit side by side.

Damian then, maintained strong links with Ravenna during the first decade or so of his religious life. This is clear from a number of activities including monastic reform, giving sermons, the presence of his family, and, moreover, his links with the archbishops. To understand the basis of Damian’s social weight in this area at this time, when he could not yet fall back on the authority of ecclesiastical rank, we must consider

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<sup>127</sup> Blum 2, p. 341; “Nolo vos lateat, dilectissimi mihi fratres et domini, quia modernus iste Iacob, rector videlicet monasterii e sancti Apolenaris, nostri montis cacumen irrepsit. Immo, qui in planis ac inoffensis solitus est convallibus repere, timoris calcaribus concitatus, velut alarum remigio praeruptis montium coactus est perniciter involare.” Reindel 2, p. 138.

<sup>128</sup> Adapted from Blum 2, p. 342; “ut de ruina sui loci vel habitationis excidio non necesse sit trepidare” Reindel 2, p. 138.

his local reputation and its sources; and to understand that we must look at his education.

As a postscript to his involvement with the archbishops in his home town, whilst it seems that Damian took less of an active interest in the church of Ravenna in the 1050s and 1060s, one of his last acts in life was to attempt to arrange the reconciliation of his home town with the Church in Rome. Alexander II had excommunicated Archbishop Henry for his support of Cadalus and Damian petitioned the pope in Letter 167 (c. 1069),<sup>129</sup> for the sake of the people of Ravenna, to allow him back into communion. In 1072 he was returning from a mission to the city itself to arrange this, when he fell ill and died at Faenza, where he was buried, and his tomb is still to be seen. That he went to such efforts to help the souls of Ravenna, despite his frequent diatribes against Cadalus, suggests that there remained a lingering connection with the city in his mind, and perhaps concern for his own family's predicament during the excommunication.

### Damian's Education

Damian's education is characteristic of the complexities and contradictions that permeate his eremitic life. It was a source of status and influence, and (perhaps for this very reason) a point of tension in his writings. Through his letters, meetings and rhetorical style, it framed much of his contact with the social world around him, and was the target of some of his own spirited invective. There are a number of scattered references to Damian's own education in his letters, as well as in John of Lodi's *Vita*. The latter provides the broad sweep of the narrative:

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<sup>129</sup> See Blum 7, pp. 233 – 235 and Reindel 4, pp. 234 – 237.

Now he [Peter's brother] handed him over, though he was still not very much bigger, to be imbued with the higher levels of reading and writing and thence also to the liberal arts. In these you may be sure, he was recognised as so easy to teach and so industrious that he was held by his own teachers to be a miracle. And when he was skilled in all liberal knowledge and had put an end to his time of learning, he soon began to make others learned, doing this with the greatest enthusiasm, as a crowd of students flocked from everywhere to the fame [or, drawn to the fame?] of his teaching.<sup>130</sup>

Many of the details are sketchy, but from the scattered epistolary references it seems that he studied in both Parma and Faenza. In Letter 44, written in 1055 to the Florentine hermit Teuzo, Damian told the story of a monk who, with great charity, offered to become the servant of the man who blinded him. He wrote that “It happens that as a young man, located in the city of Faenza for the study of letters, I heard that which I describe.”<sup>131</sup> But aside from this remark, Damian makes no further mention of his studies in Faenza.

His time in Parma receives more column inches, though we lack the name of an independently identifiable teacher, or the exact subjects that he studied. Generally speaking there is surprisingly little surviving evidence of eleventh-century Italian

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<sup>130</sup> “Quem porro iam licet grandiusculum litterarum apicibus tradidit imbuendum, nec non et studiis subinde liberalibus; in quibus scilicet tam docilis tamque industrius est agnitus, ut ipsis suis doctoribus mirabilis haberetur. Cumque discendi finem ex omni liberali scientia peritus fecisset, mox alios erudire, clientium turba ad doctrinae ipsius famam undique confluente, studiosissime coepit.” John of Lodi, *Vita S. Petri Damiani* PL 144 117B.

<sup>131</sup> “Adolescentem me in Faventina urbe propter litterarum studia constitutum audire contigit, quod enarro.” Reindel 1, p. 30. Blum translates this as “When I was a young man attending grammar school” Blum 2, p. 240.



schools, and the lack of cross-references stunts our attempts at an exhaustive prosopography of Damian's learning environment. The cathedral chapter appears to have been a key institution in the city's educational system, and by the early eleventh century men with titles such as 'presbyter et magister scholarum' begin appearing in charters associated with the chapter.<sup>132</sup> The city seems to have enjoyed a vibrant scholarly culture during the eleventh century, and Roberto Greci notes that it was based as much on individuals as institutions. He also suggests that, since the city itself did not grow significantly during this time, the rise of its school must be attributed to the power of its imperial bishops, of whom both Henry (1015 – 1027) and Hugo (1027 – 1044)<sup>133</sup> were part of the imperial chapel and chancery under Henry II and Conrad II,<sup>134</sup> a similar background to the archbishops of Ravenna. Damian gives some evocative accounts of his fellow scholars and students and these can be profitably compared with those figures from the same educational milieu about whom more is known – generally, as C. Stephen Jaeger points out, those who used their Italian education to make a name for themselves north of the Alps.<sup>135</sup>

He does mention a certain Ivo in Letter 117 (written sometime after 1064) as his *magister* in Parma, along with Ivo's associate Walter and a knowledge-hungry cleric called Hugh. Attempts to find a certain identity for this Ivo have been unsuccessful, although Franz Neukirch thought that he may have been the same Ivo who became

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<sup>132</sup> I. Affò, *Storia della città di Parma I* (Parma, 1792) p. 378, cited in R. Greci, 'Tormentati Origini' *Annali di Storia delle Università italiane* Vol. 9 (2005), special issue on the University of Parma, pp. 33-46.

<sup>133</sup> Too early to have been the same Hugh of Damian's letter.

<sup>134</sup> Greci 'Tormentati Origini'. The school declined at the end of the century, which Greci attributes to the bishops' backing of the imperial side in the investiture contest, pp. 33-46.

<sup>135</sup> C. S. Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideas in Medieval Europe 950 – 1200* (Philadelphia, 1994) p. 17.

Bishop of Piacenza (1040 – 1045).<sup>136</sup> He is not referred to again in the sources surrounding Damian. The letter was addressed to Damian's Avellanian scribe Aripandus with a view to discouraging him from the study of the liberal arts. Aripandus, it seems, having entered the religious life at Fonte Avellana without a secular education, regretted his ignorance of the classics. Damian was seeking to cure him of this regret ("Look here, brother, you want to learn grammar? Learn to decline *Deus* in the plural."<sup>137</sup>). Given the preservation of the letter, and the fact that it was put to parchment at all (Aripandus, after all, was evidently in Damian's company a great deal) it is likely that Damian envisioned a wider readership, and so the letter can be read as one of his more general exhortations against secular learning.<sup>138</sup> And presumably Aripandus would have had a certain amount of education himself to be able fulfil the requirements of his role in Fonte Avellana; a fact which suggests that Damian's denunciation of grammar as a whole had strayed into rhetorical hyperbole. Where he does refer to his education in Parma, then, it is within this negative and rhetorical context. As we shall see, many aspects of secular education seem to correspond precisely with activities and attitudes that Damian railed against in, amongst others, Letter 8 – particularly itinerancy and ambition. If Letter 117 was our only evidence, the argument would be circular, but there are other educational figures in Parma that we can draw on for comparison.

The career and writings of Damian's near contemporary Anselm of Besate give us a picture of the educational culture in Parma shortly after Damian's studies there. Anselm's career followed a very different trajectory to Damian's, and he gives an idea

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<sup>136</sup> See Reindel 3, p. 323, n. 21 citing F. Neukirch, *Das Leben des Petrus Damiani* (Göttingen, 1875) p. 15.

<sup>137</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, p. 319; "Ecce, frater, vis grammaticam discere? Disce Deum pluraliter declinare." Reindel 3, p. 317. This is a clear reference to the pagan roots of the liberal arts syllabus.

<sup>138</sup> See also Letters 21 and 23, below.

of what such an education might have brought had Damian not undergone his conversion.<sup>139</sup> Born in Milan to aristocratic parents, his letters (only 3 extant) and his work – the *Rhetorimachia* – record that he was taught in Parma by a man called Drogo. Drogo is thought to have been a canon of the cathedral chapter, and began teaching at the cathedral school between 1032 and 1035. This would put him teaching at around the same time that Damian also entered the profession following the conclusion of his studies, although we cannot be exact about these dates, as the only evidence for Damian as a *magister* comes in John of Lodi's *Vita*.<sup>140</sup> Aside from Anselm, Drogo also taught Sichelm, who went on to teach (and, indeed, taught Anselm) in Reggio, as well as Lambert Senior – a native of Liège who went on to become prior of St Hubert.<sup>141</sup> Liège was itself a centre of learning, and the cathedral school had particularly strong ties to the imperial court.<sup>142</sup>

Anselm's *Rhetorimachia* was a showpiece for the skills of rhetoric that he had learnt at Parma and Reggio – a fictitious debate between Anselm and his (possibly also fictitious) cousin Rotiland,<sup>143</sup> in which the latter was denounced for demonic and magical practices. Modern scholars, like Peters, Jaeger and Cowdrey, generally agree

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<sup>139</sup> On Anselm see H. E. J. Cowdrey, 'Anselm of Besate and some North-Italian Scholars of the Eleventh Century' *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 23 (1972), pp. 115 – 124; C. Violante, 'Anselmo da Besate' in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* Vol. 3 (1961) pp. 407 – 408; E. Peters *The Magician, the Witch and the Law* (Philadelphia, 1978), pp. 21 – 33. Besate is a small town in the hinterland of Milan. Part of Cowdrey's aim in his paper was to give an idea of the background for another famous churchman, Lanfranc (c. 1010 – 1086), who was educated in Pavia, and later became archbishop of Canterbury. His career, encompassing the scholarly, the monastic and the ecclesiastical also bears some similarity to Damian's. See H. E. J. Cowdrey, *Lanfranc: Scholar, Monk and Archbishop* (Oxford, 2003), esp. pp. 5 – 9.

<sup>140</sup> Given that the *Vita* was written after Damian's death, and contains the one mention of Damian's teaching career in any source, there is a certain amount of doubt as to whether it happened at all. The only other potential reference comes in Letter 149 to Empress Agnes, where he writes "Tres plane annorum decades subiuncto fere biennio transacte sunt, ex quo clericalem cycladem cuculla mutavi." Blum and Resnick take the *clericalis cyclas* to mean his academic robes, and *cuculla* (cowl) to be a monastic habit. Blum 6, p. 178; cf. Resnick, *Divine power and possibility* p. 10, n. 14.

<sup>141</sup> P. Scarcia Piacentini, 'Drogone da Parma' in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* Vol. 41 (1992), pp. 708 – 709.

<sup>142</sup> Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels* pp. 54 – 56, 202 – 210.

<sup>143</sup> Peters, *The Magician* p. 23.

that Anselm rather over-estimated his own talents, and that he used his education, and the *Rhetorimachia*, to secure work in the Imperial chapel, perhaps with the ultimate ambition of securing a bishopric like his contemporaries in Parma and Ravenna.<sup>144</sup> These ambitious and careerist aspects of his schooling in Parma find reflection in Damian's anecdotes in Letter 117. Hugh, *Parmensis aecclesiae clericus*:

was so ambitious in the study of the arts, that he provided himself with an astrolabe of the most brilliant silver, and given that he aspired to episcopal rank, he positioned himself as chaplain of the Emperor Conrad. And whilst returning from the royal court, filled with promises and almost certain of the coming dignity, he fell to bandits.<sup>145</sup>

Whilst the moral of the story is that his secular knowledge did him no good in the end, it is significant that ambition in the arts and ambition in the Imperial Church go hand in hand, just as in the case of Anselm. Familiarity with Classical learning and the ability to demonstrate that familiarity could be important for north Italians seeking to make an impact at the Imperial court, and in the Church.

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<sup>144</sup> Peters differs from Cowdrey and others in that he argues that the importance of verisimilitude in the rhetorical tradition that Anselm draws from means that the text is more than the idiosyncratic rant of a pseudo-intellectual. Rather, if Anselm was even halfway successful in this regard, the text must have spoken to contemporary moral and legal concerns. Jaeger, meanwhile, dismisses the idea that the *Rhetorimachia* could have convinced anybody of anything, and sees it instead as evidence that the culture of the 'old learning' – which didn't produce refined texts so much as refined people – was still active. See Jaeger, 'Envy of Angels' pp. 82 – 83. That Anselm did achieve a posting as the imperial chaplain suggests that the *Rhetorimachia* enjoyed a certain amount of success amongst the relevant contemporaries, but, given that it remained forever incomplete following Anselm's promotion (three out of a planned four books being evidently enough to impress the court), Jaeger is probably right to be sceptical about the rigour of any examination it received in Germany.

<sup>145</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, pp. 325 – 326; "Hic tantae fuit ambicionis in artium studiis, ut astrolabium sibi de clarissimo provideret argento, et dum spiraret ad episcopale fastigium, Chuonradi imperatoris se constituit capellanum. A quo dum revertitur regis pollicitacionibus cumulatus et de consequenda dignitate pene non dubius, incidit in latrones." Reindel 3, pp. 323 – 324.

Alongside this ambition, the kind of education active in Parma also fostered itinerancy – as H. E. J. Cowdrey put it, the “wandering scholar” was “a characteristic product of the Italian schools”.<sup>146</sup> Walter, the other Parmesan scholar recorded in Letter 117, certainly fits this model. He was the associate (*socius*) of Damian’s teacher Ivo,

who for nigh-on thirty years pursued wisdom through the Western lands in such a way that he hastened from kingdom to kingdom, and he went not only to the cities, towns and provinces of Germany and France, but also those of the Saracens and of Spain. But having swept the whole world with studies, so to speak, he abandoned his exile from home, and, prepared, began to teach boys in peace.<sup>147</sup>

The career path of Walter is closer to that of Sichelm than Anselm, insofar as he chose to stay within the Italian school milieu after his (quite extensive) training. His reputation as a well travelled academic may have helped him attract students. This being a rhetorical piece, things did not end well for Walter, and he was killed by men who were helpers or supporters of (*necessarii vel fautores*) of another teacher (anticipating, it seems, the fierce scholarly rivalry in the age of Abelard). Whether this actually happened or not, it suggests the centrality of individual teachers to the Parma school system, and the importance, therefore, of public reputation even to such ‘learned men’ who chose to stay and educate others in their homeland.

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<sup>146</sup> Cowdrey, ‘Anselm’, p. 118; Cowdrey draws on parallels with the Milanese scholars featured in Landulf Senior’s *Historia Mediolanensis*, who are said to have circulated around Europe, p. 118, n. 6.

<sup>147</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, p. 325; “...qui per triginta ferme annos ita per occiduos fines sapienciam persecutus est, ut de regnis ad regna contenderet, et non modo Teutonum, Gallorum, sed et Saracenorum quoque Hispaniensium urbes, oppida simul atque provincias penetraret. Sed mox ut studiis toto, ut ita loquar, orbe corrasis, exilium habitatione mutavit, et iam velut in pace compositus docere pueros coepit.” Reindel 3, pp. 322 – 323.

It is possible to tentatively identify four interrelated features of the teachers and students of Parma schools in the second quarter of the eleventh century. Individuals on both sides of the master-student relationship sought to carve a reputation for themselves on the back of their learning in the liberal arts. This reputation could allow them to form their own schools, and/or bring access to people and institutions of power, and/or form the basis for a career in the high clergy. The process of learning and the careers that followed could involve a great deal of movement, both within Italy and over the Alps. And all of this study of secular subjects took place in a context that was institutionally very ecclesiastical and clerical;<sup>148</sup> the Italian scholarly world was such that drawing a precise line of demarcation between the sacred and the profane would be impossible. This last point is borne out by the examples of Anselm and his teacher Sichelm, who was archdeacon in Reggio, and another man who Damian names as *magister meus*, ‘Mainfredus the priest’ (although this is another character about whom no other information can be gleaned).<sup>149</sup>

Cowdrey emphasised the gulf between figures like Anselm and Peter Damian. Damian’s commitment to reform meant that he had to renounce this world with which he had been so familiar.<sup>150</sup> Damian certainly wrote against many facets of the academic life in different letters. He penned general denunciations of secular learning (for example, letters 21, 23 and 117), letters against itinerancy and public adulation (letter 8 and 44), and letters against the intermingling of the ecclesiastical and the lay (letters 48, 69 and 97 – although these refer more particularly to the curia. Letter 22 is a better example of

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<sup>148</sup> cf. Cowdrey, ‘Anselm’, p. 118.

<sup>149</sup> See Letter 8, Blum 1, p. 108, Reindel 1, p. 124. The letter was addressed to the priest ‘G’ of Ravenna, and asks him to convey his greetings to Mainfredus, suggesting that the latter was residing in Ravenna by 1045. Whether this means Damian was also taught in Ravenna can only be guessed at. See also Blum 1, p. 4.

<sup>150</sup> Cowdrey, ‘Anselm’ pp. 123 – 124.

a bishop being warned against taking an interest in the things of the world). On the other hand, Damian's world was not wholly new. He still moved around a great deal, and his letters reveal something of a network of religious thinkers who, although dealing with different concerns from those in the schools and law schools of northern Italy, nevertheless shared something in terms of communication and scale. Damian was also not averse to using his writings to further his career, as in Letter 12 when he sent a collection of his written works to a bishop for precisely that purpose. And could there even be points of comparison between the *Rhetorimachia* and *The Book of Gomorrah*? This is not to say that Damian's treatise on sodomy was not a serious work, or that it was written intransitively, as it were, as an exercise in writing itself.<sup>151</sup> But both these texts took on rather eye-catching topics, and were written during pivotal periods of their authors' careers, with the express hope that they would be read by those in the highest institutional positions. For Anselm this was immediately prior to his appointment to the imperial chapel. Damian was still 8 years away from his promotion to the curia when he wrote *The Book of Gomorrah* in 1049, but in its wake he would become increasingly involved in matters concerning the Church as a whole (at least in terms on the scope of his writings), rather than just his regional diocese, as with the composition of the *Liber Gratissimus* three years later. If *The Book of Gomorrah* was not intended to reflect positively back upon its author, we might wonder why in several of the earliest collections of Damian's works, including C1 and V8, it is prefaced by a reply from Pope Leo IX (the only reply to Damian that has actually survived),<sup>152</sup> in which the pope

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<sup>151</sup> See above, p. 20, n. 53. Similar questions have, as we have seen, been raised about Anselm's work. See above, p. 54, n. 141.

<sup>152</sup> In V1, *The Book of Gomorrah* has become damaged lost many folios from the beginning of the text, so we cannot know if it too included the letter.

praised Damian's 'distinguished style' (*honestus stilus*) and, all the more important for an ascetic, praised the example of his life (*exempla tuae conversationis*).<sup>153</sup>

Imperial circles were a prime target for the students of a liberal arts background – people like Anselm of Besate and the unfortunate Hugh. When conversing with the Ravenna prelates, then, Damian spoke as a member of a certain cultural milieu. The social importance of education in this sense straddled the Alps. They may have called upon Damian as very much a *local* notable, but it was probably through recognition of a shared cultural currency (certainly more so than the weight of his family history). This may in part explain the addressing of the *Liber Gratissimus* to Archbishop Henry (though note Blum and Laqua's suggestions) – and we have seen in the introductory chapter the importance of the people that Damian named as 'editors' of his work – but it may do more to explain the tone of unexpected disappointment in Henry's lack of interest in the piece.

#### Peter Damian, Secular Learning and the *Iudices*:

Perhaps the most significant of Damian's known contacts during his stay in Ravenna, and the one most closely connected with his previous life as a teacher in the city (if we believe John of Lodi) is recorded in Letter 19. It was written in 1046 to Bishop John of Cesena, who was suffragan to Ravenna, and Archdeacon Amerlic of Ravenna and is better known as his 'disputation on the degrees of relationship' – that is, his treatise on consanguinity. The text has received considerable attention in the historiography of

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<sup>153</sup> See Reindel 1, pp. 285 – 286.



marriage and the family.<sup>154</sup> These studies have unpicked the potential social implications of Damian's insistence on seven clear degrees of relationship between marriage partners, but they are not so interested in the urban, and particularly the Ravennate context of the letter. The identity of the *sapientes civitatis*, with whom Damian began the debate, remains an important question. Historians of law have paid more attention to this problem, partly because Damian's letter reveals contact with the *Institutiones* of Justinian at a time of great development in the 'juristic revival', but also because Damian's descriptions of education in Ravenna could be taken to imply the existence of a dedicated law school.<sup>155</sup> It is worth looking at Damian's account of the meeting in full. It reflects a process we can frequently observe in Damian's letters: an oral debate made at a gathering of notables, reified in epistolary form:

As you know, I was recently a visitor in Ravenna, which, I learned, was just then much disturbed by a scruple born of a dangerous error. There was, it seems, a great dispute over degrees of consanguinity, and the argument had gone so far that the learned men of the city came together and collectively replied to the request of couriers from the people of Florence, stating that the seventh degree prescribed by the authority of the canons should be so understood, that marriage might now legally be contracted by counting four degrees in one descending line and three in the other. In bringing forward this preposterous and absurd allegation, they produced in evidence this statement that Justinian included in his *Institutes*: "A man may not marry his

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<sup>154</sup> See, for example d'Avray, 'Consanguinity' pp. 71 – 90; Brooke, *The Medieval Idea*, pp. 135-136. On the possible impact of ideas of consanguinity more generally, see C. Bouchard 'Consanguinity and Noble Marriages in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries' *Speculum* 56 (1981), pp. 268 – 287.

<sup>155</sup> See C. Radding, *The Origins of Medieval Jurisprudence: Pavia and Bologna 850 – 1150* (New Haven, 1988), pp. 91 – 92, n. 10; P. Landau, 'The Development of Law' in D. Luscombe and J. Riley-Smith (eds.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, part 1, pp. 118 – 119.

brother's or his sister's granddaughter, though she is in the fourth degree" [*Institutiones* 1.10.3]. Now from these words they construe certain misleading arguments by saying: If my brother's granddaughter is separated from me in the fourth degree, it follows also that my son can be said to be in the fifth degree of relationship to her, my grandson in the sixth, and my great-grandson in the seventh degree. I argued verbally with those who were pontificating on these matters, and so far as I was able to make my point, demolished what I consider to be a budding heresy, using arguments from canonical authorities. But since you were not quite satisfied with my effort, you thought it wise that I should set down in writing what I had orally stated, and that in a convenient abridgement I should answer, not just a few, but all of those who were swayed by this error.<sup>156</sup>

Damian elsewhere describes his disputants as "magistrates [*censores*] who are accustomed to presiding over human matters", "who control the cane amongst a crowd of students in school [*gymnasium*]"<sup>157</sup> And so it would appear that Damian is dealing with a group of people well educated and active in secular legal matters. Charles Radding and Antonio Ciaralli do not accept that Letter 19 should be taken as evidence

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<sup>156</sup> Blum 1, pp. 171 – 172; "Ravennam ut nostis nuper adii, quam mox periculosi erroris scrupulo turbatam vacillare cognovi. Erat autem de consanguinitatis gradibus plurima disceptatio, atque iam res eo usque processerat, ut sapientes civitatis in unum convenientes sciscitantibus Florentinorum veredariis in commune rescripserint, septimam generationem canonica auctoritate praefixam ita debere intellegi, ut numeratis ex uno generis latere quattuor gradibus atque ex alio tribus iure iam matrimonium posse contrahi videretur. Ad astruendam quoque praeposteram huius allegationis ineptiam, illud etiam in testimonium deducebant, quod Iustinianus suis interserit Institutis: Sed nec neptem, inquit, fratris vel sororis ducere quis potest, quamvis quarto gradu sit. Ex quibus nimirum verbis inductoria quaedam colligebant argumenta dicentes: "Si neptis fratris mei quarto iam a me gradu dividitur, consequenter etiam filius meus quinto, nepos item sexto, pronepos autem meus septem ab ea procul elongatus gradibus invenitur." Et quidem ego nudis verbis ista dogmatizantibus restiti ac prout in expeditione licuerat emergentem, ut ita fatear, heresim canonicae testimoniis auctoritatis attrivi. Quo tamen vos minime contenti dignum esse decrevistis, ut quod ore protuleram, apicibus traderem, atque ita non paucis sed omnibus hoc errore nutantibus facili compendio responderem." Reindel 1, pp. 180 – 181.

<sup>157</sup> "...qui humanis negotiis consueverant praesidere censores." "...qui inter clientium turbas tenetis in gymnasio ferulem," Reindel 1, p. 193; they are referred to also as *iudices* p. 186.

for a fully fledged school of Roman law in Ravenna at this time, as there is insufficient independent manuscript evidence to support the claim. Whilst they find that segments of the Justinian Code appear to have been circulating in northern Italy from the 1020s onwards there is little evidence for any particular difference between legal learning in Ravenna and elsewhere in northern Italy by this time. The fact that both Damian and his contemporary Anselm of Besate were able to quote from the *Institutiones* suggests that extracts from Roman law were being taught to those studying the liberal arts.<sup>158</sup> But Damian's recollection that 'learned men of the city came together and collectively replied to the request of couriers from the people of Florence' indicates a certain level of sophistication and group consciousness amongst those involved with law in Ravenna at this time.

Jack Goody saw Damian's defence of such an extreme consanguinity prohibition as a product of a political manoeuvre against the authority of the secular lawyers in Ravenna, over any internal logic that Damian's ideas on the subject might possess.<sup>159</sup> But whilst the respective institutional allegiances of the protagonists are clearly relevant, as is Damian's relative expertise in canon law,<sup>160</sup> he does not make any argument against the *iudices* right to debate the matter in the letter.<sup>161</sup> He does couch

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<sup>158</sup> C. Radding and A. Ciaralli, *The Corpus Iuris Civilis in the Middle Ages: Manuscripts and Transmission from the Sixth Century to the Juristic Revival* (Leiden, 2007) pp. 68 – 80 & 84 and Cowdrey, 'Anselm' p. 120.

<sup>159</sup> J. Goody, *The Development of Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge, 1983) p. 136, citing P. Daudet, *Études sur l'histoire de la juridiction matrimoniale de l'église* (Paris, 1933), pp. 98-9. Despite the 'group consciousness' noted above, we might doubt, given Damian's meandering terminology, whether those acting as lawyers in Ravenna constituted such a formidably assertive faction as Goody's reading implies.

<sup>160</sup> Hildebrand seems to have asked Damian to compile a canonical collection, as Damian relates in Letter 65. It does not seem that he complied with this request, unless it has since been lost. Given that Damian (and his successors and Fonte Avellana) had such an eye for posterity, this seems unlikely. J. Joseph Ryan cautiously suggests that the collection could have been the text stolen by Pope Alexander II, famously referred to in Letter 156. J. Ryan, *Saint Peter Damian and his Canonical Sources: A Preliminary Study in the Antecedents of the Gregorian Reform* (Toronto, 1956), pp. 154 – 157.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. D'Avray, 'Consanguinity' p. 75, n. 17.

his argument in terms of the dichotomy between ‘urbane’ arguments and ‘simple’ wisdom, but with a lighter and more ironic touch than in most of his letters:

But since we are arguing with the clever urbanity of those skilled in law, let us also bring out a witness skilled in law for our side [which turns out to be Moses].<sup>162</sup>

As Letter 19 was addressed to Archdeacon Amerlic and Bishop John, and Damian’s return to the subject some years later was also addressed to men of the cloth,<sup>163</sup> it seems unlikely that the secular lawmen mounted a serious claim to ultimate jurisdiction over the matter. Indeed, we could point to a number of disputes that Damian had with churchmen over particular points of canon law that were equally heated, sometimes even more so, yet did not challenge the status or jurisdiction of those involved. Damian recounted a face-to-face debate in Letter 112 with the clergy of the church of Lodi:

At one time when fat bulls of the church of Lodi surrounded me in armed conspiracy, and with fierce noise a herd of calves beset me, as if spewing bile into my mouth, they said “We have the authority of the council of Tribur [895] on our side,” if I cited the name correctly, “which grants those promoted to ecclesiastical orders the right to marry.” To whom I replied, “This council of yours, whatever you wish to call it, is not acceptable to me if it does not agree with the decision of the Roman pontiffs.” For they hunt

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<sup>162</sup> Adapted from Blum 1, p. 180; “Sed quia cum legis peritorum faceta urbanitate conflagimus, legis peritum quoque in nostrae partis testimonium producimus,” Reindel 1, p. 188.

<sup>163</sup> See Letter 36 (c. 1050), addressed to an unidentified priest and archbishop.

out certain spurious bits of canons, and to these they grant the force of law that they might deprive the canons of their authentic value.<sup>164</sup>

Just as with Damian's debates in Ravenna, he followed up this group debate with a letter to clarify or restate his position (and in doing so, recast the face-to-face encounter). And just as in Ravenna, a group of men with local weight appear to have settled on a consensus without reference to external authorities. The close ties between cathedrals and the schools have already been established, and so it would be wrong to assume too sharp a dividing line between these cases on the basis of the personnel involved.

Nevertheless, Damian's position in the debate was essentially to override a citation from secular Roman law with church canon law ("It is indeed an honourable thing for men who are accustomed to preside as judges in human affairs to appear unpretentious in mystical and spiritual cases")<sup>165</sup>, and Damian's disputes with lawyers and intellectuals deserve closer inspection.

Letter 19 adds another dimension to our understanding of the north Italian schools (*gymnasia*), *iudices* – members of a particular genus of northern Italian urbanite whose exact association with the schools, at least in Ravenna, appears very close (assuming that Damian's repeated association of the two was not the product of ignorance, which

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<sup>164</sup> Blum 5, p. 265; "Aliquando cum me Laudensis aecclesiae tauri pingues armata conspiratione vallarent, ac furioso strepitu vituli multi tumultuantes infrederent, tanquam ructum fellis in os meum evomuere dicentes: Habemus auctoritatem Triburiensis, si tamen ego nomen teneo, concilii, quae a promotis ad aecclesiasticum ordinem ineundi coniugii tribuat facultatem. Quibus ego respondi: Concilium, inquam, vestrum, quodcunque vultis, nomen optineat, sed a me non recipitur, si decretis Romanorum pontificum non concordat. Aucupantur enim quaedam quasi canonum adulterina sarmenta, eisque praebeant auctoritatem, ut autenticam canonum valeant vacuare virtutem." Reindel 3, pp. 266 – 267.

<sup>165</sup> Blum 1, p. 186; "Honestum quippe est, ut ipsi etiam in mysticis ac spiritalibus causis se praebeant humiles, qui humanis negotiis consueverant praesidere censores." Reindel 1, p. 193.

given his background seems unlikely). Charles Radding has shown that the *iudices sacri palatii* of Pavia, who had dominated northern Italian law in the tenth century, now, in the eleventh, had to compete with local *iudices* in other cities, even though, as seems to have been the case in Ravenna, the study of law in and of itself was not as developed as a discipline as it was in Pavia.<sup>166</sup> This is despite the appearance of functioning groups of experts like those in Letter 19.

The three very similar letters, numbers 21, 22 and 23<sup>167</sup> that were discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis reveal something of how Damian presented his relationship with secular learning.<sup>168</sup> For the consideration of Damian's developing relationship with the northern Italian style of education the manner in which he opens letters 21 and 23 is of particular interest. Unsurprisingly he emphasises the gulf between such 'worldly' practices and his own. But his style and vocabulary recall his earlier affiliations. The addressees, though difficult to identify, are also important for understanding the context of these writings. That Letter 21 is addressed to a *prudentissimus iudex* Bonushomo of Cesena means it may be useful for seeing what Damian expected such a man to respond to.<sup>169</sup> As Cesena is only around 20 miles due south of Ravenna, this letter also adds to our conception of the particular culture of the Ravennate area.<sup>170</sup> Letter 21 begins:

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<sup>166</sup> Radding *The Origins of Medieval Jurisprudence* pp. 87 – 112.

<sup>167</sup> Robert Bultot notes the letters' connection, though comes to no firm conclusions, R. Bultot *Christianisme et Valeurs Humaines* Vol. 4, part 1 (Paris, 1963), 'Pierre Damien' p. 128, n. 321.

<sup>168</sup> Letter 21: Reindel 1, pp. 202 – 211; Blum 1, pp. 197 – 207, Letter 23: Reindel 1, pp. 217 – 225; Blum 1, pp. 216 – 226, Letter 22: Reindel 1, pp. 211 – 216; Blum 1, pp. 208 – 215.

<sup>169</sup> This identification comes with the proviso that it relies on superscripts that may have been added by copyists in the late eleventh century, but these are in two of the earliest and best Avellanian collections, and they do not contradict the address line 'B. prudentissimo iudici.' See Introduction pp. 14 – 18.

<sup>170</sup> Compare the example of Sichelm and Anselm above, who moved between Parma and Reggio, which are also around twenty miles apart. This seems to have been near enough to allow for some association of personnel, but far enough to allow for a distinction between educational institutions.

I am not unaware, that when my letter is delivered into the hands of secular grammarians [*grammatici*], then it is scrutinised for whether the pleasantness of artistic style is present, the colour of beautiful rhetoric is sought for and the diligent mind searches for deceptive circles of syllogisms and enthymemes. He strives, to be sure, for knowledge that swells [him with pride], he wonders not at the charity that builds, but according to Solomon: “The words of the servants of God<sup>171</sup> are as goads, and as nails deeply fastened in.” [Eccles 12:11]<sup>172</sup>

Letter 21 is almost entirely concerned with the worthlessness of worldly goods in the face of the Last Judgement, and Damian compiles a great number of scriptural references to the end of the world to illustrate his point. Aside from the opening paragraph, clearly tailored to the addressee, Letter 22, addressed to a certain ‘Bishop G’ is identical, which makes the admonitions seem rather generic, and it was a theme that Damian often turned to in his letters to the powerful. The pointed commentary in Damian’s description of God as a *iudex* who cannot be corrupted through a gift (*munus*) is included in both letters, and perhaps reflects the relevance of adjudication for both bishops and *iudices*.<sup>173</sup> But for all the crossover between these texts, his anti-rhetorical rhetoric was only deemed appropriate when addressing the local judge despite the fact that schooling in northern Italy, as we have seen, gave exactly the kind of prestige one might need to be granted a bishopric. The problem, in Letter 21, is in part a certain

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<sup>171</sup> The Vulgate has *sapientium*, instead of *servorum Dei*, which was perhaps a little too ambiguous for Damian, given the context. c.f. Reindel 1, p. 203, n. 4.

<sup>172</sup> Adapted from Blum 1, pp. 197 – 198; “Non ignoro, quia cum mea epistola grammaticorum saecularium manibus traditur, mox utrum adsit artificiosi stili lepor attenditur, rhetoricae venustatis color inquiritur et captiosos sillogismorum atque enthymematum circulos mens curiosa rimatur. Aucupatur nimirum scientiam, quae inflat, charitatem autem, quae aedificat, non miratur, sed iuxta Salomonem: “Verba servorum Dei debent esse quasi stimuli et quasi clavi in altum defixi.”” Reindel 1, p. 203.

<sup>173</sup> Warnings regarding gifts and clarity of judgement in cases appear also in Damian’s letters to his fellow cardinals after 1057.

shallow appreciation of the art of rhetoric (though Damian seems to be purposefully referring to all parts of the *trivium*), but also the danger of becoming ‘inflated’ – and this brings us back to the similar fears he expressed in Letter 8, and the fact that these fears were particularly related to the city.

Letter 23 starts in near identical fashion to Letter 21. The recipient of Letter 23 is hard to determine; the address line calls him simply a *prudentissimus vir B.*. The late eleventh-century superscripts suggest a *Philosophus saeculi*, which rings true for much of the text. Perhaps, whilst, he was almost certainly not Bonushomo of Cesena, he may have been another *iudex*, or a man of similar public standing, or perhaps a schoolmaster like Sichelm, Drogo, and (possibly) Damian himself. He may, indeed, simply have been an imaginary philosopher for a *pro forma* literary exemplar. So Damian begins:

I am not unaware, brother, that when my letter is delivered into the hands of secular men, then it is searched diligently for the splendour of eloquence, it follows that the methodological arrangements of the disposition is examined, whether the colour of rhetorical power shines forth, or the arguments involve thoughts of dialectical subtlety. It may even be asked whether categorical or hypothetical syllogisms which are put forward are arranged through proofs that inevitably follow.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Adapted from Blum 1, p. 216; “Non ignoro, frater, quia, cum mea epistola saecularium manibus traditur, mox eloquentiae nitor curiose perquiritur, quam consequens sit dispositionis ordo tractatur, utrum rhetoricae facultatis color eluceat, an et sententias argumenta dialecticae subtilitatis involvant. Quaeritur etiam, utrum categorici an potius ypothetici, quae proposita sunt, per allegationes inevitabiles adstruant syllogismi.” Reindel 1, pp. 217 – 218.



Damian goes into some depth regarding the differences between secular and spiritual wisdom – on the poverty of the former and the rewards of the latter. Characteristically, Damian uses the art of rhetoric to attack rhetoric itself. Jullian Yolles recently examined Damian's treatment of rhetoric in letters to fellow ascetics to try and resolve this apparent contradiction, and he attempted to identify the possible conditions by which Damian rendered the art of rhetoric 'safe' in the context of his letters. Rhetoric composed in the silence of the eremitic cell is free from the worldly lack of discipline seen in scholarly circles, and from the confusion of the world. "Damian would have been able to excuse his incongruous use of rhetoric on the basis that it was silent, and hence, a pure kind of eloquence."<sup>175</sup> This would not be applicable to Letter 19 (and others of its ilk) that show Damian recalling arguments made in the heat of public debate, and this thesis hopes to shed some light on the extent to which the eremitic cell was a key part of Damian's public platform. But the distinction between disciplined and undisciplined uses of rhetoric, which lies at the heart of Yolles's analysis, is nevertheless a useful one.

Although he often spoke disparagingly of those trained in the liberal arts, it is clear that Damian was not opposed to their study. Letter 125, written sometime after Damian's legation to France in 1063, survives only as a fragment in one of the late eleventh-century Avellanian collections – Vat. Cod. Urbino. Lat. 503. What remains of the letter reveals that Damian made arrangements for the education of his nephew – one of a

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<sup>175</sup> J. Yolles *The rhetoric of simplicity: faith and rhetoric in Peter Damian* Unpublished MA thesis (Utrecht, 2009) p. 42. Yolles also concludes that rhetoric used to support Damian's own take on orthodox doctrine had clearly been appropriately subordinated to spiritual wisdom.

number of helping hands that Damian seems to have extended to the youngster by way of patronage:<sup>176</sup>

In addition I ask for the mercy of your sanctity over this youth, that is to say my sister's son, that from paternal piety it provide a teacher and at the same time nourishment, and receiving him rude and ignorant, or just as Jacob leaning simply on his staff [Genesis 32:10], return him to his own [people] presently with the two-fold wife of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*.<sup>177</sup>

As the letter has no addressee, it is hard to say exactly what kind of institution that Damian was sending his nephew into. But as Damian claims to hold the “angelic community” [*angelicus conventus*] as worthy of public praise, a monastic school seems most likely, probably in France.<sup>178</sup> The difference between monastic and urban schools, and the importance of the latter in northern Italy at the time is clearly part of the story here. But given Ariprandus's regret that he did not study the liberal arts *before* entering the religious life, it would seem that monastic schools were not in any significant sense in competition with their cathedral and secular counterparts in the region.<sup>179</sup> It should

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<sup>176</sup> The first mention of Damianus comes in Letter 122, dated to either 1064 or early 1065. In the letter Damian petitioned Pope Alexander II on behalf of Bishop Harro of Orleans (it seems his legation to France provided new contacts and ‘networking’ opportunities). The letter ends: “Because I don’t have our seal at present, I enjoin that [the letter] be taken by my nephew Damianus, with the certainty of a seal.” (“Quia sigillum nostrum ad presens non habeo, nepoti meo Damiano ut sigilli certitudine potiatur, iniungo.” Reindel 3, p. 399). Damian never mentions his other messengers by name in this way (although some letters do appear to have been akin to letters of introduction for certain individuals) so it would appear to be a deliberate attempt to present his nephew to the highest ecclesiastical authorities in an act of nepotistic patronage. Damianus was to become associated with the hermitages under Damian’s jurisdiction. See Chapter 3 pp. 142 – 143.

<sup>177</sup> Adapted from Blum 6, p. 26; “Rogo praeterea sanctitatis vestrae clementiam super adulescentulo isto, uterinae videlicet meae sororis filio, ut illi magistrum simul et victum paterna pietate provideat, et rudem imperitumque suscipiens, ac velut Iacob baculo simpliciter innitentem, ad propria postmodum cum gemina trivii vel quadrivii uxore remittat.” Reindel 3, p. 412.

<sup>178</sup> See Letter 166: “In this connection, my sister’s boy, Damianus, a young man devoted to the religious life...recounted for me this well known tale that he had heard while studying in Gaul.” Blum 7, p. 228

<sup>179</sup> This is not to say that monastic learning was insignificant – Damian himself enlarged Fonte Avellana’s library a great deal during his tenure, and soon after Damian’s death Monte Cassino produced a work on

also be noted that whilst the unhappy Aripandus was told that he was missing nothing, the social realities of preparing his nephew for a successful future in the religious life made ‘the two-fold wife of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*’ indispensable. And, like the figure of Walter, Damianus was obliged to travel to foreign climes in pursuit of his edification.

Rather than an institutional clash, Damian concentrates on the appropriate attitude and approach to liberal education. Returning to Letter 23, much of this involves Damian relating secular education to other elements of his conception of ‘the world’, and more particularly with sensual pleasure. In one passage he designates secular knowledge as a corporeal form of knowing. Drawing an analogy from Genesis chapter 14, where Chodorlahomor and the four kings defeated five kings in battle,

What are the four kings, if not the four virtues, which sacred scripture name as principle? What, in truth, is designated through the five kings, if not the same number of bodily senses, and through these last things, knowledge?<sup>180</sup>

Although the battle between virtue and carnal knowledge takes place within the individual, Damian emphasised the site of the biblical confrontation in the *vallis silvestris*, which is similar to the vocabulary Damian uses for the natural habitat for the eremitic life, in contradistinction, as always, with the urban world.<sup>181</sup> But the central

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letter-writing theory that actually made use of some of Damian’s letters. But Damian still chose to send his nephew all the way to France for an education in all seven liberal arts in a monastic setting.

<sup>180</sup> Adapted from Blum 1, p. 218; “Qui sunt enim quattuor reges, nisi quattuor virtutes, quas scriptura sacra nominat principales? Quid vero per quinque reges, nisi todidem sensus corporis ac per eos exterior scientia designatur?” Reindel 1, p. 219.

<sup>181</sup> See, for example, Letter 44.

point is the conflation of the pursuit of worldly knowledge with a vaguely defined and messy category of ‘carnal delights’. This Damian does quite explicitly:

Indeed, what we are saying about knowledge, let this very thing be shown to be necessary in regard to the pleasures of this world<sup>182</sup>

This culminates in a discussion of man’s two wives, ‘virtue’ and ‘sensual pleasure’ (p. 223). Moreover, he describes the contemporary approach to education in the cities, with a certain irony, as “unrestrained wisdom”<sup>183</sup> (*immoderata sapientia*). In other words, man’s relationship with secular knowledge is characterised (for Damian) by the need for control and self-regulation. And it is perhaps not coincidental that, just as he was arranging his nephew’s study abroad Damian wrote to Damianus himself extolling the virtues of chastity, with sensitivity towards the particular difficulties of maintaining a pure adolescence.<sup>184</sup>

In addressing the *Philosophus saeculi*, Damian argued for an unequivocal separation of God and secular learning by citing Romans 8:7:

The knowledge of this world [*prudentia huius mundi*] is inimical to God; that is, it does not submit to the law of God, nor indeed can it.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Adapted from Blum 1, p. 222; “Enimvero quod de scientia loquimur, hoc ipsum ex delectatione huius vitae necesse est fateamur.” Reindel 1, p. 222.

<sup>183</sup> Reindel 1, p. 219.

<sup>184</sup> See Letter 123, Reindel pp. 399 – 407.

<sup>185</sup> Adapted from Blum 1, p. 218; “Prudentia huius mundi inimica est Deo; legi enim Dei non subicitur, ne enim potest.” Reindel 1, p. 219. The Vulgate actually reads “Because the wisdom of the flesh [*sapientia carnis*] is an enemy to God. For it is not subject to the law of God: neither can it be.” (“Quoniam sapientia carnis inimicitia est in Deum legi enim Dei non subicitur nec enim potest.”). If this is a deliberate change, and he cites the same passage correctly in another letter (See Letter 28), then it might have served to further conflate that of the world and that of the flesh – particularly if the reader was familiar with scripture to a sufficient degree to read the change as intentional.

But despite the rhetoric, Damian's position in Letter 23 actually develops into one of moderation. It can be observed in his letters to the margrave of Tuscany that Damian was not looking to make 'all the world a hermitage' in the manner of Romuald of Ravenna,<sup>186</sup> but actually saw (at least on the occasions of these letters) the importance of the exercise of secular power. To the addressee, be he Bonushomo or otherwise, Damian concedes:

But since you occupy not the lowest position in the secular world, and you certainly can't escape bringing together words of secular expression when conversing, or sometimes coming into contact with studies of some literary discipline, with this distinction must be employed by you, so that you render yourself weakened in secular things. In true spiritual studies you should exert all the muscles of your mind, in those [secular] things you should show yourself to be negligent, but tenacious in these [spiritual] things.<sup>187</sup>

Damian fully recognises the political currency (or 'social capital', as it were) of an education in the liberal arts. His most unequivocal rejection of the Classics, along with his letter to his scribe Aripandus appears in a letter to another hermit – possibly one residing with him at Fonte Avellana – in which he denounces a long list of pagan philosophers and rhetoricians (Plato, Demosthenes, Pythagoras and Cicero amongst them). Letter 23 underlines the importance of education in eleventh-century northern

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<sup>186</sup> Although this characterisation of Romuald's aims comes from Damian himself – see his *Vita Beati Romualdi* p. 78.

<sup>187</sup> Adapted Blum 1, p. 220; "Sed quia tu in saeculo non imum optines locum, nec potes prorsus effugere, ut aut saecularis eloquii cum colloquentibus verba non conferas, aut aliquando de litteratoriae disciplinae studiis aliquid non attingas, hac tibi discretione utendum est, ut in saecularibus quidem te velut hebetem reddas. In spiritalibus vero studiis omnes tuae mentis nervos exerceas, in illis te praebeas neglegentem, in his autem omnino vivacem." Reindel 1, p. 221.

and central Italy, and demonstrates another aspect of Damian's complex relationship with it – complexity produced not only by his personal history, but also by his particular position as a significant ascetic figure in Italian society.

#### Damian and Urban Eremitism:

Although Damian became less involved with Ravenna as time wore on, it would be wrong to see this as a gradual retreat to the desert. His social contacts, and eventually his episcopal and curial positions, drew him time and again into the Italian urban scene. Rome was a focal point, and Damian delivered sermons there even late in life, as we see in letter written to Cencius, prefect of Rome, to whom Damian wrote three letters<sup>188</sup> between c.1065 and c.1071. They both attended St. Peter's in Rome on the feast of the Epiphany in 1067. On that occasion Cencius had in fact given a sermon to the assembled audience. Damian seems to suggest that Cencius only spoke on this public occasion because he was having difficulty with his own voice and could not be heard by the assembled crowd. As this letter was written so soon after the event, perhaps it was written as, in essence, a gift of gratitude to the prefect.<sup>189</sup> Damian praised Cencius in terms that appear to blur the strict division of labour between the religious and the lay, as he recounts in Letter 145, written the following day:

It is clear, therefore, that every Christian is a priest, through the grace of Christ, and hence ought not to draw back without cause from proclaiming his great deeds. You, especially, imitate the example of this priest and

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<sup>188</sup> See letters 135, 145 and 155, although 135 has been reconstructed from segments in John of Lodi's *Collectanea*, and may in fact be the remnants of several letters.

<sup>189</sup> Letter 54, to his scribe Aripandus, is an example of this kind of favour.

king,<sup>190</sup> and whilst in court you promulgate laws of legitimate decree, and in church you edify the minds of the attending people through the force of sacred exhortations.<sup>191</sup>

This quite surprising assertion that all men are at liberty to engage in some form of preaching might make for an interesting comparison with Damian's dealings with other religious men, particularly those in Florence – another city Damian visited on more than one occasion – to which this chapter will now turn. Although before moving on, it is worth mentioning Letter 155, also to Cencius, which seeks to curb displays of excess piety by the prefect:

Take care, therefore, lest the zeal of your own prayer, by which you strive to pursue courageous things, you neglect the instruction of the innumerable people who have been entrusted to you, and you let fall, because of your own favourable condition, the general health of the common people, which expects justice from you.<sup>192</sup>

This introduces another recurring theme from Damian's letters: the limits of piety imposed by public figures' duties to the social order. This becomes particularly acute

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<sup>190</sup> See Rev. 1:6 "And [who] hath made us a kingdom and priests to God and his Father" and 1 Peter 2:9 "But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood", both of which Damian quotes in this letter. "[H]uius sacerdotis et regis" seems a more specific reference, perhaps to Gen 14:18 "But Melchisedech the king of Salem, bringing forth bread and wine, for he was the priest of the most high God", but it is unclear as Damian does not elaborate.

<sup>191</sup> Adapted from Blum 6, p. 151; "Constat ergo quemlibet Christianum esse per Christi gratiam sacerdotem, unde non inmerito debet eius annunciare virtutem. Tu praesertim huius sacerdotis et regis evidenter imitaris exemplum, dum et in tribunalibus legitimae sanctionis iura promulgas, et in aecclesia per sanctae exhortationis instantiam adstantis populi mentes aedificas." Reindel 3, pp. 528 – 529.

<sup>192</sup> Adapted from Blum 7, pp. 76 – 77; "Cave ergo, ne propter peculiaris orationis studium, quibus insistere forte contendis, disciplinam tam innumerabilis populi qui tibi commissus est negligas, et propter proprium commodum, communem salutem plebis, quae iustitiam a te praestolatur, omittas." Reindel 4, p. 72.

when ‘justice’ is at stake, as we will see in the next chapter, where I will examine Damian’s relationships with the great northern Italian magnates. But it adds another perspective to Damian’s dealings with the *iudices* in particular.

Looking to Florence as a site of Damian’s interaction with the urban world means examining one of his more famous encounters, one which already possesses a rich historiography – his meeting with Teuzo. Eremitism has been on the fringes of our discussion, as something external to but generative of Damian’s urban persona. His contact with Teuzo put the relationship between hermits and the city centre stage. As with forests in France around 1100, the mountainous Italian regions were readily envisioned by holy men and their hagiographers as deserts of purity and contrasted with the corruption and worldliness of cities. But in eleventh-century Florence, able to find the desert even amid the narrow streets of the city, Teuzo lived an eremitic life in his cell. The dispute between these two hermits is also part of an ongoing and difficult relationship that Damian had with the city, where he does not seem to have had the same popularity or the same impact as in his native Ravenna.

Teuzo, unusually for a minor religious figure who left no writings of his own, is known to us through three different groups of source material: the *Vitae* of St. John Gualbert, the charters of the Florentine Abbey of St. Mary – the *Badia Fiorentina* (see fig. 4), and the Letters of Peter Damian. Until relatively recently it was primarily through his association with John Gualbert that Teuzo figured in Italian historiography.<sup>193</sup> Gualbert was founder of the Vallombrosan congregation of monks. He and his followers

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<sup>193</sup> See, for example, G. Miccoli, *Chiesa Gregoriana: Ricerche sulla Riforma del Secolo XI* (Florence, 1966), p. 80; C. Violante, ‘La riforma ecclesiastica del secolo XI come progressiva sintesi di contrastanti idee e strutture’ in C. Violante (ed.), *Sant’Anselmo vescovo di Lucca (1073-1086) nel quadro delle trasformazioni sociali e della riforma ecclesiastica* (Roma, 1992), pp. 1 – 15.



campaigned successfully for the removal of the simoniac Bishop of Florence, Peter Mezzabarba, in the late 1060s – a move which Damian himself was sent as legate to oppose, as we know from Letter 146. Teuzo was considered to be important insofar as the *vitae* allotted to him something of a formative role in the development of Gualbert. More recently Teuzo has again been enlisted, by Phyllis Jestice, Umberto Longo, Emily Bannister and Kathleen Cushing, to explore aspects of Damian's theology.<sup>194</sup> These studies, particularly those of Jestice and Cushing, have rightly highlighted the relevance of contemporary debates about simony, and Damian's position on how best to deal with offenders. It was only a few years previously that Damian had produced his *Liber Gratissimus*, outlining his 'moderate' stance on the validity of sacraments. Equally important has been the idea of holy men, both Teuzo and the Vallombrosans 'acting in the world', which has been seen as the very antithesis of Damian's approach to eremitism. Cushing in particular argues that the Vallobrosans incurred Damian's wrath to such an extent because they did not conform to the cloistered and contemplative role he envisioned for the monastic clergy.<sup>195</sup> Teuzo tends to be drawn into this analysis: Jestice for example defines him as an 'evangelical hermit', and for this he was reason abhorrent to Damian. But I believe that, although he was one of a number of Florentine figures that Damian had problems with, his case is in fact more nuanced than that of a troublesome gyrovague.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Jestice 'Peter Damian against the Reformers', pp. 67 – 94 and *Wayward Monks and the Religious Revolution of the Eleventh Century* (New York, 1997); K. Cushing 'Of *Locustae* and Dangerous Men' pp. 740 – 757; U. Longo 'Pier Damiani *versus* Teuzone', pp. 63 – 77.

<sup>195</sup> Cushing 'Of *Locustae* and Dangerous Men', esp. 740 – 743 and 753 – 757. Cushing also makes the point that belief in such a sharp distinction was not shared by all of Damian's peers in the curia.

<sup>196</sup> On gyrovagues see the *Rule* of St. Benedict, which defines them in its first chapter as monks "Always on the move, they never settle down and are slaves to their own will" T. Fry (ed.) *The Rule of St. Benedict in English* (Collegeville, 1982). On the application of this label to Teuzo, see E. Bannister *Peter Damian* pp. 175 – 217.

The historiography of Teuzo has been greatly influenced by the *vitae* of John Gualbert. Teuzo's spiritual and political influence in Florence is perhaps most forcefully presented in the *vitae* of Gualbert, and it is here that we appear to get the richest representations (in terms of fullness of character) of Teuzo's style of life. Gualbert, the story goes, left his monastery of San Miniato al Monte upon learning that the new abbot was a simoniac (this was in 1035). He then entered Florence and visited Teuzo to seek his advice. One *vita*, composed in the 1090s by Abbot Andrea of Strumi, describes the scene:

Learning of this [that his monastery had a simoniac abbot] the blessed John secretly left with the help from others and entering into the city they came to a great and famous old man by the name of Teuzo, who being of venerable life had at that time confined himself within the walls of the city of Florence in a certain small cell next to the monastery of the Blessed Mary Forever Virgin of the aforementioned city, from whence he was giving salubrious advice to all and to nobody did he deny salvation-brining counsels. This man publically condemned simony, which had thoroughly taken possession of the whole order of the Church for a long time.<sup>197</sup>

This 'public condemnation' of simony is the nearest we get to evidence for Teuzo having been in any real sense 'evangelical', or in any way engaging in agitation in a

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<sup>197</sup> "Quod beatus Iohannes comperiens cum alio sibi favente clam exinde discessit et civitatem ingressi ad quendam magnum et famosissimum senem nomine Teuzonem venerunt, qui venerabilis vitae tunc intra Florentinae urbis menia in quadam parva cellula iuxta monasterium beatae Mariae semper virginis prefatae civitatis se concluserat, de qua cunctis salubria dabat monita et salutifera nemini negebat consilia. Hic publice simoniam damnabat, quae totum ecclesiasticum ordinem tempore multo penitus invaserat." F. Baethgen (ed.), 'Vita Iohannis Gualberti Auctore Andrea Abbate Strumensi' in *MGH Scriptorum* XXX.2, p. 1081.

manner akin to the Vallombrosans. But this is the only reference to him speaking publicly, and the nature and extent of his contact with civic society is left uncertain.<sup>198</sup>

If we compare the above with the second *vita* of John Gualbert, penned anonymously circa 1115, we find another vision of Teuzo's interaction with people in Florence and beyond:

At the same time there was, in the aforementioned city [Florence], a certain religious man by the name of Teuzo, who, although he may have stayed in a city full of people, was still separated from the people, because no place is not remote to a mind full of compunction, and he remained near the servants of God by fasting in his cell, free from vigils and prayers. Many good men came to him and commending themselves to his prayers by the very wall of his enclosure they were consoled and strengthened by his exhortations. And Emperor Henry III himself venerated him and enjoyed his counsel and friendship.<sup>199</sup>

The divergence and ambiguity of the accounts in the *vitae* indicate that they are far from ideal sources for constructing an idea of Teuzo's life in practice.

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<sup>198</sup> Damian makes one comment in his letter that could be taken to imply that Teuzo was active, or at least present, in the public spaces of Florence: "Cruribus pedibusque nudatis incedere in heremo quidem regula, in foro autem afflictio cernitur indiscreta." But, due to its presence amidst a highly rhetorical passage, this does not appear as proof that Teuzo was a public figure in the sense that he appeared regularly in public spaces. Reindel 2, p. 14; "In the hermitage it is indeed the rule to go barelegged and barefooted, but in the marketplace this penance is viewed as an indiscretion." O. Blum *Letters* vol. 2, p. 226.

<sup>199</sup> "Per idem tempus erat in predicta civitate quidam religiosus vir nomine Teuzo, qui, quamvis in civitate maneret plena populo, tamen, quia nullus locus est non remotus compunctae menti, separatus erat a populo et ad Dei servitium solus manebat in cella ieiuniis, vigiliis et orationibus vacans. Ad hunc multi boni viri veniebant et se suis commendantes orationibus sepe ipsius consolabantur et confirmabantur exhortationibus. Imperator etiam H[enricus III] eum venerabatur eisque consiliis et amicitiiis utebatur." Baethgen (ed.), 'Vita Iohannis Gualberti Auctore Discipulo Eius Anonymo' in *MGH Scriptorum* XXX.2, p. 1105.

These texts were composed in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, and cannot be removed from that context. The first *vita* was put together between 50 and 60 years after the meeting with Gualbert is said to have taken place, and in this time the political atmosphere of Florence had changed considerably. The author, Andrea of Strumi was certainly no stranger to ecclesiastical politics, and as a disciple of Arialdo of Milan (of whom he also composed a *vita*) he had a particular commitment to campaigning against simony. Nor can there be any doubt that *vitae* were important ideological texts for the proponents of reform – Damian’s *Vita Beati Romualdi*, and, as we saw above, some of his minor hagiographical works of Ravennate figures give testament to that. As such, the fact that the anonymous author of the second *vita* chose to leave out the statement “Hic publice simoniam damnabat”, despite having the first *life* to work from, is suggestive of the kind of manipulation to which such details could be subjected.<sup>200</sup>

That both *vitae* were written by members of the Vallombrosan congregation is also significant. By the time they were written the congregation was one of the most significant presences in the Florentine countryside, in direct proprietorial competition with the episcopacy of Florence. Bishop Ranieri (and later Goffredo) and Countess Matilda were in close alliance, and the contest for land was heightened by the emergence of an independent civic administration: the nascent commune.<sup>201</sup> Given the direct competition for lay donations, is it altogether surprising that the *vitae* present Teuzo, who appears as an opponent of a consistently corrupt Florentine episcopate, as the antecedent of Gualbert?

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<sup>200</sup> Cf. Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism* Appendix 1, p. 108.

<sup>201</sup> G. Dameron, *Episcopal Power and Florentine Society*, pp. 55 – 60.

As it is, Teuzo plays a very distinct narrative role in the *vitae*, akin to what formalist literature analysts might call the ‘dispatcher’, with overtones of the ‘donor’ thrown in.<sup>202</sup> It is Teuzo (the character, rather than the person) who advises John Gualbert of the need for the public denunciation of both the allegedly simoniac Bishop Atto of Florence and the abbot San Miniato al Monte, so setting him on the quest that will lead to the establishment of the Vallombrosan congregation (quoting again from Andrea’s *vita*):

The old man, discerning the faith and perseverance of the man [Gualbert] said to him, rejoicing: ‘Go with your companion and in the public market of the city and in the presence of all the people announce that the Bishop and Abbot are simoniacs, and then withdraw from the place.’<sup>203</sup>

And given that the charter evidence gives glimpses of his existence in both 1038 and 1068/1070, it seems that this *senex* must have been in reality of similar age to Gualbert himself, or at least not much older. Hagiography and Historicity always make for uncomfortable bed-fellows. Teuzo’s apparent fame, age and public standing are integral to the *vitae*, as they simplify the fluid religious politics of eleventh-century Florence, and bequeath Gualbert’s subsequent anti-simony campaigns strong, politically endorsed precedent. Through both this narrative and Damian’s later involvement in the controversy surrounding the deposition of Peter Mezzabarba, the association with Gualbert has come to dominate the way historians think about Teuzo, and the way they read Damian’s Letter 44.

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<sup>202</sup> See V. Propp *Morphology of the Folktale* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., trans. L. Scott, Austin, 1968) pp. 79 – 81.

<sup>203</sup> “Cernens igitur senex viri fidem et constantiam, gratulans dixit ad eum: ‘Perge itaque cum tuo sodale et in foro publico civitatis coram omnibus episcopum et abbatem exclama esse simoniacos et tunc demum cede locum.’” Baethgen (ed.), ‘Vita Iohannis Gualberti Auctore Andrea Abbate Strumensi’ in *MGH Scriptorum* XXX.2, p. 1082.

Nonetheless, these accounts echo some elements that are to be found in the sources contemporary to Teuzo's life, particularly the imperial connection. If Damian was a significant figure on the Ravenna scene, then Teuzo seems to have attained considerable celebrity on the other side of the Apennines. The earliest evidence for Teuzo is in the charters of the Badia. Turning to the charter evidence is difficult in so far as 'Teuzo' appears to have been a common name at the Badia, particularly in the middle decades of the eleventh century. They clearly don't all refer to the same Teuzo, but there are two charters that do beyond doubt. The earlier of these issued on 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 1038 by the Emperor Conrad II (1024-39) transferred to the Badia property confiscated from a sizable number of people judged disloyal to the imperial crown,

for the love of God and the remedy of our soul, and for obtaining the prayers of Teuzo and of the other brothers dwelling there, and on account of the intervention of our most beloved wife Gisla and our dearest son Henry.<sup>204</sup>

The *interventus ac petitio* of Gisla and Henry (soon to be Henry III) are common enough in Conrad's charters. Nor is it unusual to find other names alongside those of the imperial family. But these usually identify men of institutional standing: figures like Margrave Boniface of Tuscany, or the Imperial Chancellor Bruno of Carinthia, or bishops and abbots more directly involved in the transaction.<sup>205</sup> At this time Teuzo's name appears unencumbered with titles or adjectives; he is simply Teuzo, praying, in

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<sup>204</sup> "qualiter nos pro dei amore animaeque nostrae remedio et pro orationibus Teuzonis ceterorumque fratrum ibi commorantium adiscendis sive ob interventum Gislæ nostrae contectalis dilectissimæ et Henrici nostri karissimi filii" H. Bresslau, *Diplomatum Regum et Imperatorum Germaniae, Tomus IV, Conradi II Diplomata* (Leipzig, 1909), No. 273, p. 378.

<sup>205</sup> For example, see Bresslau *Diplomata* 4, pp. 158, 193, 193, 203, 272, 339.

would seem, in conjunction with the ‘other brothers’ of the abbey.<sup>206</sup> It is unclear whether he was living apart from the community at this point, but he appears to have been holy enough to be listed individually, and yet this holiness in no way seems to have impinged on his connection to the Badia.

This connection to the Badia is something that appears in one form or another in all the sources in which Teuzo is named. In the 1038 charter, Teuzo’s style of life clearly has positive ramifications for the Abbey. The Emperor, it must be said, had his own agenda to pursue in confiscating land from his enemies. Indeed, throughout his itinerary in Italy in 1036 – 1038 Conrad was dealing with widespread and prolonged resistance to his rule across the northern regions of the kingdom. There were, it seems, plenty of lands to be confiscated. But in the competition for these lands’ destination, the power of Teuzo’s prayers, the *orationes Teuzonis*, may have been key. The emperor, indeed, may well have felt in need of prayers – Herman of Reichenau’s *Chronicle* records that in July of 1038 the emperor’s army was returning to Germany beset by plague, and that Henry’s wife had succumbed to the disease only two weeks before the prayers of Teuzo were sought.<sup>207</sup> The charter’s styling of *Teuzo ceterique fratres* suggests that Teuzo’s holiness, whilst potentially a source of danger for the stability of monastic hierarchy (as we shall see), could in fact be very useful to the Badia.

In 1055 Peter Damian visited Florence, most likely to attend the synod being held in that city in the presence of the Emperor Henry III.<sup>208</sup> It is during his stay that Damian appears to have visited the ‘urban hermit’, as he called him, and composed the letter to

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<sup>206</sup> Bresslau *Diplomatum* 4, p. 378.

<sup>207</sup> I. Robinson (ed. and trans.), *Eleventh-Century Germany: The Swabian Chronicles* (Manchester, 2008), p. 71.

<sup>208</sup> G. Lucchesi, *Clavis S. Petri Damiani*, p. 89; See also Berthold of Reichenau’s chronicle account in Robinson *Eleventh-Century Germany*, pp. 99 – 100.

him in the wake of this encounter.<sup>209</sup> As with many of Damian's letters, there are good reasons to believe that Damian intended this one to be read by more than just Teuzo alone. The very preservation of the text, once again the recasting of a face-to-face debate in literary form, implies that Damian recognised (or, rather, desired recognition of) its edificatory value on general points of morality and religious practice. Previous readings of Letter 44 have focused on two passages: one sees Damian expressing his dissatisfaction with Teuzo's residence in an urban environment:

But I ask you, if you are a monk, what do you have to do with cities? If you are a hermit, what are the crowds of a city to you? What do noisy marketplaces or towers contribute to a cell? Indeed, what else can be thought of those who, as if there were a shortage of forests seek solitude in cities, except that they are more concerned with the favour of the crowd and glory than with the perfection of the solitary life.<sup>210</sup>

In short, Damian considered the city to be a deeply unsuitable place for a hermit because it unbalanced what Umberto Longo called the dialectical relationship between withdrawal from the world and social leadership, which relied in no small degree on concepts of eremitic space.<sup>211</sup> In the second passage, Damian rebukes Teuzo for refusing to take the sacraments from the priests of his own monastery, on the suspicion that they were tainted by simony. Damian presents Teuzo with his own questions thus:

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<sup>209</sup> Reindel 2, pp. 7 – 39; Blum 2, pp. 221 – 249.

<sup>210</sup> Adapted from Blum 2, p. 225; “Sed, quaeso, si monachus es, qui tibi cum urbibus? Si heremita, quid tibi civium cuneis? Quid enim cellae vel fora strepentia vel turrita conferunt propugnacula? Enimvero qui tamquam deficientibus silvis solitudinem in urbis quaerunt, quid aliud credendum est, nisi quia solitariae vitae non perfectionem, sed favorem potius et gloriam aucupantur?” Reindel 2, p. 13.

<sup>211</sup> “un rapporto dialettico tra ritiro dal mondo e protagonismo sociale” U. Longo ‘Pier Damiani *versus* Teuzone’ pp. 69 – 70.



I will tell you what you said: “Who ordained this priest?” and someone answered, “This Bishop,” and you said, “who promoted him to the episcopal office, and in what manner?” “It was the pope who did so.” But as to how fit they were you then added, “Granted that the pope consecrated him a bishop gratis, did the pope himself come gratis to the apostolic throne?”<sup>212</sup>

These two passages have been used to support the assumption that Teuzo, at least by 1055, was something of a maverick holy man, stirring up the civic population with tales of simoniacal ordinations, just as the Vallombrosans did in the late 1060s. The fact that Damian was sent in 1068, as papal legate, to dispute with the Vallombrosans has meant that these two distinct episodes have been collapsed into a single narrative that hinges on Damian’s supposed theological stance that religious men should avoid ‘acting in the world’. It is quite possible that the *cives* of Florence were taking notice of Teuzo’s refusal to accept these sacraments. Indeed, in Letter 45, written around the same time to the clerics of the church of Florence Damian complained of the influence of ‘urban hermits’ in opposing his views of the importance of self-flagellation, although whether this was a reference to Teuzo is not clear.<sup>213</sup> But the context of Letter 44 must not be underplayed. Damian clearly lays out the reason for his involvement with Teuzo:

Now there was between you and the abbot of your monastery intolerable enmity and long standing dissension. He was a mild man of simple disposition, he went beyond all the duties of proper satisfaction and humility

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<sup>212</sup> Blum 2, p. 237; “Dico, quod dicis: ‘Quis hunc presbiterum ordinavit?’ Repondetur: ‘Ille episcopus’. ‘Et ipsum’ ais, ‘ad episcopatus officium qualiter aut quis promovit?’ ‘Papa scilicet’. Qualiter autem ipsi viderint, moxque subiungis: ‘Esto tandem, quod papa gratis episcopum consecraverit, numquid et papa ipse ad apostolicae sedis apicem gratis ascendit?’” Reindel 2, p. 27; Teuzo was correct insofar as Archbishop Gerard (1046 – 1061) had been ordained by Gregory VI, who admitted his purchase of the apostolic see and was obliged to resign as a result.

<sup>213</sup> See Blum 2, p. 245, n. 5.

in his agreements with you, and brought me in to arbitrate the contract between you and him.<sup>214</sup>

The details of this dispute are unclear, but the problem is consistently presented as one of *discordia* within the monastery of St. Mary.<sup>215</sup> There was probably still a public dimension to this dispute, centring on the Badia's reputation, and Damian's concern with Teuzo's public standing reflects this. But the fact that Damian was called in by the abbot is significant. The reason that Damian disputed with Teuzo in the first place is not Damian's independent evaluation of his style of life, nor necessarily that he found Teuzo's life to be diametrically opposed to his own. Rather, it is the fact that Teuzo was causing dissension in the Badia. Damian does not, in the end, advise Teuzo to leave the city, or even to cease giving advice to others, but to stop causing friction in his institution. He sums up thus:

I have related the above examples to you, father Teuzo, so that you might stop being inflamed by pride in your solitary living...So now restrain that excessively stern and hostile mind of yours, and compose yourself in patient and gentle charity with your brothers. For whoever cannot live peaceably with his companions because of his furious spirit, will necessarily be alone in the manner of a wild beast, living like an animal.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Blum 2, p. 224; "Erat quippe inter te et abbatem tui monasterii non ferenda simultas et inveterate discordia. Ille igitur utpote vir mitis ac simplicis animi sponsonibus suis cuncta digne satisfactionis et humilitatis iura transcendit, et nos sequestri foederis inter se et te executores instituit." Reindel 2, p. 12; Blum 2, p. 224.

<sup>215</sup> Bannister notes that Letter 44 connects with Damian's wider concern with monastic obedience. Perhaps this attracted the abbot's attention? See E. Bannister *Peter Damian* pp. 217 – 218.

<sup>216</sup> Adapted from Blum 2, p. 241; "Superiora tibi, Teuzo pater, exempla proposui, ut desinas de singularitate tumescere...Iam igitur ab illa rigida nimis et thorosa mentis tuae animositate compescere, teque in patientia cum fratribus tuis et blanda charitate compone. Quisquis enim per feritatem animi suis contubernalibus non concordat, ferarum more solus necesse est, ut bestialiter vivat." Reindel 2, pp. 31 – 32.

Damian's conclusion, does not betray a simple hatred of 'acting in the world'. His use of the word 'charity' – *charitas* – is not to be understood as a euphemism for keeping quiet. Indeed, it is in the services of 'charity' that Damian's delivers many of his most stringent criticisms. It is, rather, an attitude with which advice and correction can be suitably given to others.

This charity is opposed to Teuzo's 'pride', and a relevant aspect of this pride is drawn out when Letter 44 is compared to Letter 8: the letter written to the 'treasurer of the ark of sethim wood' examined earlier in this chapter. Damian certainly appears to have considered himself capable of treading the dangerous line between 'saving souls' and becoming an honoured public figure, and more particularly capable of staying and preaching in cities, as he did in Ravenna and elsewhere. But there is a crucial difference in terminology in the two letters. In Letter 8 (that is, the letter to the Ravenna Treasurer) Damian is wary of *elatio* and *honor*. In Letter 44 (to Teuzo) it is *arrogantia*. The two clearly have very different meanings, the former referring to the public/external act of 'glorification', or being revered, the latter to the private/internal/individual attitude of arrogance or haughtiness. Damian certainly has problems with urban eremitism, as we have seen. But the problem is not simply that living as an urban hermit leads Teuzo into contact with the people of the world, but that this contact has been undertaken with insufficient mental and spiritual preparation. Reading this Letter 44 in conjunction with the 1038 charter, it seems that what we are dealing with is not so much a renegade preacher bent on causing trouble for the establishment, but rather an important member of a religious community whose public stature had encouraged, quite literally, a 'holier-than-thou' attitude.

The next point of contact that we have with Teuzo, and the last contemporary to his lifetime, is a charter given between 1068 and 1070 by King Henry IV in which he confirms the abbey's possessions. It shows that the Abbot Peter and Teuzo were reconciled after 1055, and, crucially, that Teuzo, referred to here as the *venerabilis solitarius*, was still able to live his form of the eremitic life whilst remaining attached to the Badia. The idea that Teuzo could in anyway be considered an itinerant preacher-hermit rests on the assumption that "after a quarrel with the abbot, Teuzo withdrew from the monastery."<sup>217</sup> It should be stressed, then, that there is no evidence to support such a statement. Even granting that at some point Teuzo is likely to have left the communal living space of the Badia in order to ensconce himself in his *parva cella*, it seems that this eremitic style of life was not, in fact, irreconcilable with his membership, in one form or another, to the institution.

In Florence, as in Ravenna, a variety of powers – imperial, episcopal, monastic and a more informal cultural power amongst the *cives* of the city – interact in different ways with a man of local holy notoriety. The dynamic relationship between Damian, Teuzo and their respective locales was shaped by quite specific local circumstances. We will touch on Florence's situation with its bishop, Peter Mezzabarba, again in the next chapter. But it is telling that when Damian, as he recorded in Letter 44, raised the example of Romuald of Ravenna with Teuzo, the latter was singularly unimpressed:

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<sup>217</sup> Jestice 'Damian against the Reformers' p. 69.

But at one point in the discussion when St. Romuald was used as a witness, you at once inquired whether this Romuald was in his day considered to be a saint, or whether he was now in heaven.<sup>218</sup>

To which Damian remarked that everyone of ‘our provinces’ (*nostrae provinciae*) thought so. And, in a rather petulant remark made in Letter 146, that is his letter to the *cives* of Florence following his legation in defence of the bishop: “But since I have had much to say in my book [*Liber Gratissimus*] about such matters, I shall not dwell any longer on them. For only he who reads will understand”,<sup>219</sup> perhaps there is a note of frustration that he is no longer dealing with an urban academic clique, but a potentially quite diverse slice of the city’s population. He certainly implies in Letter 45 that the holy men of Florence, perhaps Teuzo amongst them, held particular influence over the *plebes*, which may have been quite a pointed distinction from the *cives* that Damian normally seems to have mixed with.<sup>220</sup> There is also an intriguing insult contained in the same letter, possibly aimed at Teuzo himself, though again Damian may have had someone else in mind:

But let this critic of the brothers, this master of unknown doctrine [*doctrinae magister ignotae*] tell me – him, I mean, who so arrogantly wields his intemperate rod over pupils [*discipuli*] that as yet he has been unable to attract any students [*clientela*].<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Blum 2, p. 223; “Cumque super quodam disceptationis articulo sanctus Romualdus in testimonium duceretur, praesto quaesitum est, utrum ipse Romualdus aut tunc extiterit sanctus, vel nunc sit in paradiso receptus.” Reindel 2, p. 10.

<sup>219</sup> Blum 6, p. 159.

<sup>220</sup> Adapted from Blum 6, p. 159; “...qui autem sub monachice professionis nomine plebibus imperant” Reindel 2, p. 36.

<sup>221</sup> Adapted from Blum 2, p. 248; “Sed dicat mihi censor iste fratrum et doctrine magister ignote, qui nimirum sic sibimet super discipulos intempestivam arrogat ferulam, ut necdum preceptorum praebuerit clientelam” Reindel 2, p. 38.

In transporting the vocabulary of the schools so familiar to him in Ravenna (*magister* and *cliens* appear a number of times in the sources above), what point was Damian trying to make? A wry commentary on the limitations of urban eremitism, perhaps? This chapter began with the historiography of the purity of transactions in an urban context, and it is not a coincidence that John of Lodi recorded Damian's reason for entering the religious life as being his despair at being paid to teach.<sup>222</sup> Whether the story is true or not, it may well reflect something of Damian's approach to such associations. On the other hand, with this insult Damian may have been trying to have his cake and eat it: mocking this urban ascetic, whoever he was, for courting the *plebes*, yet not being able to attract a single *cliens* of substance; the kind of substance that Damian, with his combination of education and eremitic cultural impact, could converse with easily.

Damian's approach to the *saeculum*, in Letter 44 and elsewhere in his writings, is more subtle than a simple, blanket abhorrence. It is clear that he dealt not only in modes of separation, but also the potential techniques of contact, and methods that circumvented the threat of worldly 'pollution'. Two of these techniques were particularly relevant in the urban world: the first was the external eremitic space of Fonte Avellana, which was present with him in the city in a way similar to that which we saw in his short *Vita* of Rodulf.<sup>223</sup> The second, equally bound to his concept of eremitism, was his 'inner strength', formed in the practices and neo-martyrdom of his ascetic life.

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<sup>222</sup> John of Lodi, *Vita S. Petri Damiani* PL 144, 118 – 121.

<sup>223</sup> See Introduction, pp. 24 – 32.

His associations with these cities brought him into contact with many people of various ranks and occupations. One group that have yet to be discussed (and this in itself may be significant, if it is representative of a certain detachment from what has been discussed above) are the great magnates of northern and central Italy. How Damian dealt with these men and women will be the subject of the next chapter.



fig. 5: image © 2012 Digital Globe, Cnes/Spot Image, European Space Imaging

The medieval heart of Florence – the square line of the former walls still clearly visible in the street layout – with the position of the Florentine Badia marked with a circle.

## Chapter Two: Peter Damian and the Italian Magnates

It has been remarked upon that contemporary politics rarely makes its way into Damian's letters.<sup>224</sup> There are certainly few narrative accounts of the numerous wars and the political intrigues of eleventh-century Italy to be found in the collections of his works. This contributes to the 'other worldly' status of Damian's writings, and these omissions were, most likely, intentional on Damian's part.<sup>225</sup> Even now, most of the historiography surrounding the letters focuses on the history of ideas and theology, rather than the social history of Damian's surroundings. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of material in the letters revealing Damian's contact with, and movement among, the political elites of northern and central Italy. Throughout his religious life he made recurrent, though irregular, contact with the magnates of Tuscany, and his letter to Adelaide of Turin, though a one-off, is a key text for the study of how Damian's letters dealt with the concepts of power, Church and gender. The character of his correspondence changed over the years as Damian grew in rank and reputation, a process that created new problems out of his dual existence as an eremitic cardinal.

The questions for this chapter, then, are: How did Damian interact with the magnates in his area? What were his priorities when corresponding with them? What particular issues were ignited in contact with female rulers? And, what light does this all shed on his conception of worldliness?

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<sup>224</sup> Blum 1, pp. 12 – 14.

<sup>225</sup> A useful comparison is that of Dominic of Sora (d. 1032), studied by John Howe, who directed a small collection of eremitic foundations similar in many ways to Damian's own institutions. The sources surrounding him contain practically no direct reference to the upper echelons of society, even though, tangentially, they suggest that such contact must have taken place. Howe argues that this is because Dominic's relationship with them would have appeared subservient, and so detrimental to the hagiography that forms the mainstay of the evidence. Why this is not the case for Damian is a question for this chapter. See J. Howe, *Church Reform and Social Change in Eleventh-Century Italy: Dominic of Sora and his Patrons* (Philadelphia, 1997), esp. pp. 118 – 122.



### Damian's Contact with the Powerful:

As with almost all Damian's letters (*The Book of Gomorrah*, as we have seen, being the exception), no return correspondence survives from the margraves of northern and central Italy, making the nature of the relationships difficult to determine, and raising the question of whether they enjoyed two-way interaction at all. As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, Damian's letters have often been taken as evidence of his reclusive life, keeping the world at arms' length. But in fact the letters suggest that face-to-face contact between Damian and the margraves, and Godfrey in particular, was not uncommon. In Letter 67 (written between 1059 and 1063), Damian prefaced his admonitions of Margrave Godfrey by claiming that "I now repeat in my letter what I have often said to you in conversation."<sup>226</sup> This phrase, or variations of it, appears a number of times in Damian's letters, and in the context of his exhortations it could be read as a *topos*. By drawing together a series of diverse encounters and recasting them in epistolary form, Damian could imbue his arguments with a new homogeneity of purpose. These letters (and again, this is common to the majority of those letters that have survived) had a wider intended readership than the one acknowledged in the address line, but if we take Godfrey as a genuine recipient of Letter 67 (and there are good reasons for supposing that Damian did in fact send his epistles to the margrave, rather than reading them as 'open letters' as we will see below), then, at least in the broadest sense, the reference to previous conversations can be taken as real.

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<sup>226</sup> "Quod ergo vivis tibi sepe sermonibus protuli, hoc nunc per epistolam replico." Reindel 2, p. 281. Note also that in Letter 68, Damian refers to the composition and delivery of Letter 67: "Scripsi tibi nuper epistolam de servando rigore iustitiae" Reindel 2, p. 290.

Damian also occasionally drops references to his relationship with Godfrey into his letters to other people. In Letter 140, written in 1066 and addressed to Pope Alexander II, Damian recounted that he had been “recently conversing with the most excellent Duke Godfrey”.<sup>227</sup> Likewise in Letter 155, written to Cencius, prefect of Rome, Damian retells a story that he insists he heard from Godfrey himself.<sup>228</sup> Damian made a habit of citing his sources for such contemporary word-of-mouth stories (of which there are many examples in his letters), so it may be unkind to suggest that this amounts to name-dropping. But Damian certainly doesn’t appear embarrassed by his personal associations with such lay figures, and does not treat them, in these instances at least, as a cause for any eremitic anxiety.

Whilst we can be sure that Damian did meet with the margraves, he says rather less about the circumstances in which such meetings came about. The only mention of a context for his direct contact with the margraves of Tuscany comes in Letter 51 (written in 1057) where Damian told the Countess Beatrice that he had spoken to Godfrey “at the tomb of the blessed prince of the apostles” (i.e. St. Peter’s in Rome), most likely at one of the synods held by Pope Stephen IX. These synods were a very important arena for Damian to make contact with other people,<sup>229</sup> and not only people in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.<sup>230</sup> Godfrey’s attendance was a mark of his new power in Italy, having married the widowed Beatrice in 1053. His involvement with Roman ecclesiastical politics would only get deeper – Stephen IX (1057 – 1058) was his

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<sup>227</sup> “...cum nuper in excellentissimi ducis Gotfredi versaremur alloquio...” Reindel 3, p. 479.

<sup>228</sup> The story is a complimentary tale of Godfrey’s uncle Godfrey, and we might read more into its inclusion in this rather short letter. Blum 7, pp. 76 – 78, Reindel 4, pp. 71 – 73.

<sup>229</sup> It was, however, far from Damian’s only mode of contact – he preached extensively, attended the Archbishop of Ravenna at his palace, and travelled to other great gatherings, including the coronation of Emperor Henry III in Rome.

<sup>230</sup> His rather fraught dealings with the Florentine hermit Teuzo, and with the people of Florence more generally, followed directly from his presence at a synod in the city in 1055 (before he was promoted to cardinal, it should be noted). See Chapter 1, pp. 76 – 93.

brother, and following his death Godfrey expelled his (allegedly simoniac) successor Benedict X from Rome, allowing the ascension of Nicholas II to the papal throne.<sup>231</sup>

A final word on the reality of Damian's correspondence with the margraves: in Letter 148 Damian stated that he was enclosing a letter for the Empress Agnes for Godfrey and Beatrice to send with their next post north of the Alps:

I humbly beg your excellency, moreover, that if you are sending someone to Germany, you might, for love of us, include the enclosed letter to my lady, the empress.<sup>232</sup>

This passage is rare insofar as it tells us something of the mechanics of the distribution of Damian's letters beyond the edited collections that come down to us today. It also suggests that dispatching letters over long distances was far from safe or easy. It may not be an unrelated fact that the vast majority of Damian's letters are addressed to

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<sup>231</sup> See Berthold of Reichenau's *Chronicle* entries for 1057 and 1058 in Robinson, *Eleventh-Century Germany* p. 102; Nor was Godfrey the first ruler of Tuscany to be deeply involved with papal politics. There is a fragment of a letter from Henry III to the Margrave Boniface in 1048 (although its authenticity cannot be guaranteed) concerning his support for the deposed Pope Benedict IX: "You however, who restored the lawfully deposed Pope [Benedict IX] to the pontificate and for greed for rewards scorned our imperial authority, know what you know already, that if you don't quickly amend my imminent arrival, I will amend it against your will and give to the people of Rome a shepherd worthy of God." "Tu Autem, qui papam canonice depositum in pontificium reduxisti et per premii cupiditatem nostrum imperium contempsisti, scito prenoscens, quia si non emendaveris cito adventum meum propinquum, emendari faciam te invito et populo Romano dignum deo donabo pastorem." H. Bresslau and P. Kehr (eds.) *MGH Diplomatum Regum et Imperatorum Germaniae, Tomus V, Heinrichi III Diplomata* (Berlin, 1931) p. 290.

<sup>232</sup> Adapted from Blum 6, p. 170; "Excellenciam praeterea vestram humiliter obsecro, ut si quem ad teutonica loca transmittis, pro karitate nostra ad dominam meam imperatricem hanc epistolam dirigas." Reindel 3, p. 546; Blum notes, this "demonstrates the actual transmission of two letters, indicating that Damian's correspondence was not just a literary exercise to escape the boredom of his hermitage." Blum 6 p. 170, n. 6 But it is important to remember that, firstly, this can only be extended tentatively to Damian's letters as a whole, that there are numerous letters that may not have been sent to their addressee, and that even cases where the addressee may have been fictional. Secondly, this fact does not necessarily imply that such letters were 'just a literary exercise' (though Blum may have been indulging in the irony of caricature), only that their audience and purpose may have differed from those indicated by the addressee that Damian chose to name.

recipients in northern and central Italy, although overall this was simply a reflection of the social circles that he interacted with in Italy: he was above all a regional figure.

In the case of Adelaide, we have only Letter 114, written in 1064, as evidence of their interaction. Whilst retreading one of his well-worn themes – asking a lay ruler to protect religious property – Damian recounts their shared presence at a gathering of abbots and bishops:

I would remind you, however, of the churches that are near to you, so that you might not divide their property in the manner of some vicious wealthy men, but on the contrary, when you were present and a great number of bishops and managers [*rectores*] of monasteries spoke together, there were none of them who complained that had they suffered any trouble either from you or your agents<sup>233</sup>

In this example the occasion does not appear to be a general synod or council, but rather a gathering of bishops and lay-abbots specifically from Adelaide's territory. We shall return to the relations between the countess and the regional religious institutions below, but this scenario fits the pattern of Damian's presence at gatherings of various levels of formality and stature. Given that he only wrote to Adelaide in the first place following his travel through her territory whilst returning from his mission to Cluny,<sup>234</sup> it is clear that the letters give a rather partial view of the manner of Damian's interaction with the lay potentates. Far from letters being his primary mode of communication, 'face-time'

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<sup>233</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, pp. 299 – 300; "De aeclesiis autem, quae tibi adiacent, ammonerem, ne more pravorum quorumlibet divitum earum bona minueres, sed cum te presente plures nobiscum colloquerentur episcopi monasteriorumque rectores, nullus eorum fuit, qui vel a te vel a tuis procuratoribus ullam sibi molestiam conquaereretur inferri" Reindel 3, pp. 301 – 302.

<sup>234</sup> On which, see Chapter 3, pp. 182 – 195.

that was centrally important to the way Damian went about making his mark on northern and central Italian society and politics.

### The 'Straight Talking' Damian: Ideal Rulers and his Relationship to them

His letters to the margraves address a range of issues, but they tend to be framed by familiar *topoi*. The most common is Damian's warning that whatever status leaders of men maintain through worldly goods and powers now, these will all count for nought in the afterlife. This appears in his earliest letter to the margrave of Tuscany, who at the time was Boniface III of Canossa (ruled c. 1030 – 1052, father-to-be of Matilda):

What is the advantage to any man today covered out in gold, gems and purple attire, frequently surrounded by a body of troops, if it happens that tomorrow he is dragged naked, bound, and robbed of all military support to the punishment of hell?<sup>235</sup>

But Damian was not averse to going beyond generalities such as these, and aimed quite direct criticisms at the margraves and their rule, particularly Godfrey. In both letters 67 and 68<sup>236</sup> Damian upbraided Godfrey (who was now in Italy more permanently following several years making war against the emperor north of the Alps) with the twin complaints that he was neglectful in his rule and lenient in his justice. So, whence does Damian claim the right to admonish the most powerful man in Italy? Letter 67 begins

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<sup>235</sup> Adapted from Blum 1, p. 85; "Quid enim prodest quemlibet hodie auro gemmis et purpura contegi, frequenter militum cuneis constipari, si cras contingat eum nudum et reum omnique solatio destitutum ad inferni supplicia pertrahi?" Reindel 1, p. 103.

<sup>236</sup> In Letter 68 Damian refers back to Letter 67 ("I sent you a letter recently concerning the deliverance of justice with severity"; "Scripsi tibi nuper epistolam de servando rigore iustitiae" Reindel 2, p. 290), and so these are two distinct letters, not drafts of the same.

with a denunciation of flatterers and flattery; that is to say, Damian answers the silent but implicit question ‘why should you heed my advice above others?’:

One who daily drinks wine, laced with spices and honey, will at length find the accustomed sweetness offensive to his taste, and will be happy to enjoy the tartness of a cheaper and less hearty wine. And, indeed, Solomon says that “a surfeit of honey is bad for a man.” [Prov. 25;27] Moreover, when eating food smothered with rich sauce, a green salad will inhibit squeamishness and will quiet the inner urge of a man to relieve himself by retching.

Now, most eminent sir, you drink mead every day, mixed, as it were, with the flavour of nectar, when everyone who speaks to you says only what you wish to hear, and tries to suggest nothing but what will be flattering to your ear. He carefully composes beforehand whatever he must plainly tell you, hammering it out and polishing it as if he were using some workman’s tools so that, whatever the subject, it is prompted by the underlying humility rather than with the free authority of the speaker [*libera loquentis auctoritas*] with authority. How unfortunate it is, and subject to deception, to be at the height of earthly dignity, for while people say what they think to other men, for the powerful of this world they put together their arguments in words that do not ring true. And rich men are compelled to always hold those suspect, who to others appear unsophisticated. Thus while worldly men drink only your excellency’s honeyed wines, and suggest only what they think will please you; while you enjoy the sweet pleasure of daily

flattery, you must not take amiss the bitterness of my words, since it is often a relief to have green and bitter herbs along with sweeter foods.

And so, I now repeat in my letter what I have often said in person. I am saying, indeed, that I am greatly displeased that you neglect this principality in which almost 100,000 people live, as if it were some little country village, and do not turn it over to a governor who will rule and administer it.<sup>237</sup>

In approaching the margrave in this way, Damian was making himself a part of a very long tradition of ‘frank speakers’, present, in different forms, in biblical, ancient and medieval sources.<sup>238</sup> We saw, in an earlier chapter, the tension in Damian’s writing between rhetoric and *simplicitas*, and its importance in his dealings with the schools of northern Italy – men whose stature relied on their relative learning and eloquence. But

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<sup>237</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, pp. 70 – 71; “Qui pigmentata cotidie bibit ac melle condita, aliquando longa dulcedine gustus eius offenditur, et in austeritate vilis vappae iocundius delectatur. Et certe per Salomonem dicitur, quia qui mel multum comedit, non est ei bonum. Inter adipati quoque iuris edulia virentes herbae fastidium reprimunt, et nauseantis ad vomitum pectoris archana componunt./ Tu sane, vir eminentissime, quodammodo mulsa cotidie percipis, et nectareo sapore conspersa dum tibi unusquisque ad votum loquitur, nec aliud quicquam suggerere nititur, nisi quod tuis auribus blandiatur. Quicquid tibi plane dicendum est, prius accurate componitur, et quasi fabrilis instrumenti studio cuditur ac politur. Ut videlicet quicquid illud est, substrata potius humilitas suggerat, quam libera loquentis auctoritas dicat. Et infelix et deceptioni semper obnoxium mundanae fastigium dignitatis, quia cum caeteris dicant homines illa, quae sentiunt, potentibus saeculi fucati sermonis argumenta componunt. Et eos, qui se aliis exhibent puros, divites compelluntur semper habere suspectos. Dum ergo mundani quilibet homines excellentiae tuae pocula tantummodo mellita propinent, id enim solummodo suggerunt, quod tibi placitum esse perpendunt, inter dulces cotidianae assentationis illecebras non debet moleste ferri meorum amaritudo sermonum, tamquam inter suaves epulas aliquando placet agrestium viror herbarum./ Quod ergo vivis tibi sepe sermonibus protuli, hoc nunc per epistolam replico. Fateor sane multum mihi displicet, quia monarchiam hanc, in qua pene centum milia degunt hominum, tamquam rusticum quendam viculum neglegis, eamque duci per quem regi et amministrari debeat, non committis.” Reindel 2, p. 281

<sup>238</sup> On the ancient modes, see M. Foucault, *Fearless Speech* (Los Angeles, 2001) and P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (Madison, 1992). What Damian is saying in this passage is in many aspects similar to ‘political *parrhesia*’, one of Foucault’s suggested ‘ideal types’ of parrhesiastic interaction. Damian is, he says, intervening (unsolicited, as far as we know) on the behalf of the *centum milia* under Godfrey’s rule. ‘Parrhesia’ being roughly translated as ‘free speech’ or ‘fearless speech’, the act of speaking out of turn, or even in inversion of, normal relative social status. See M. Foucault *Fearless Speech* Damian may have been familiar with the word, though he never used it, through the work of Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae 2: De Rhetorica* in P. Marshall (ed. and trans.) *Isidore of Seville, Etymologies II* (Paris, 1983) p. 90.

here he does not appeal to the ‘roughness’ of his speech, and it seems that different power structures called for different constructions of *liber auctoritas*. Nor does he frame his advice as the product of *caritas*, as he tended to do in admonitory letters to fellow religious figures. Rather, Damian offered his ‘free authority to speak’ as an antidote to the honeyed words of his flattering counsellors, whose ability to be blunt with Godfrey was stunted by their relationship with his power. Although Damian was not very original in his model of frank speech, it nevertheless became blended with contemporary concerns, as in a letter to his fellow cardinals in 1063 where he argued that the acceptance of gifts curbed their *libertas eloquentiae*.<sup>239</sup> If in the letter to the cardinals he saw churchmen’s authority being limited by, in the broadest sense, simony, here to Godfrey he is expressing the same basic idea that those tainted by self-interest are unable to speak freely. From this perspective Damian’s ‘freedom’ to speak seems to have come from his ecclesiastical position; a by-product of which might loosely be understood as his struggle against ‘pollution’ that was the focus of his letters to the curia and the popes of his era.<sup>240</sup>

The letter to Boniface had been written whilst Damian was but a hermit, and his promotion to cardinal in 1057 provides a silent context in the letters to Godfrey. But the anti-pollution ideals that he stressed as cardinal were equally a part of Damian’s eremitic background: indeed, they inhere in the very concept of the ‘desert’. It is important to note that Damian consistently addressed his letters as *Petrus Peccator Monachus*.<sup>241</sup> His *Vita Beati Romualdi* reveals that Damian was well aware of the

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<sup>239</sup> Letter 97, Blum 5, p. 77.

<sup>240</sup> This understanding of ‘pollution’ is taken from the anthropological work of Mary Douglas, later adopted and adapted by P. Brown, R. I. Moore, C. Leyser *et al.*

<sup>241</sup> This was Damian’s standard moniker, in contrast to Alcuin, another great medieval parrhesiast, who tailored his naming to particular social interactions. Rather, Damian’s eremitic care of the self (so to speak) formed the backdrop to almost all his letters. On Alcuin’s practice, see M. Garrison, ‘An aspect of



spiritual authority with which the eremitic life endowed its exponents, particularly in a regional context as he discussed Romuald's relationship with the then margrave of Tuscany, Rainer (ruled 1014 – 1027):

When Rainer had become lord of the region, he used to say that "Not the Emperor, not any other man, is able to strike great fear into me in the way that the appearance of Romuald terrifies me – before his face I do not know what to say, nor can I find any excuses by which I could defend myself." In truth, the holy man possessed by divine gift the grace that whatever sinners, especially powerful men of the world, would come into his presence would soon be struck with internal trembling as if they were in the presence of the majesty of God.<sup>242</sup>

Damian emphasises the eremitic context of his advice, and the eremitic humility conveyed in the twin titles 'sinner' and 'monk', as the letter proceeds. Towards the end of Letter 67 Damian retells a story, not recorded anywhere else,<sup>243</sup> that he claims to have heard from a certain Count Ubaldus, "a clearly eloquent and prudent man",<sup>244</sup> in which the Emperor Theodosius consults a hermit (*heremita*) on matters of state. These orally transmitted tales are a fairly common feature of Damian's letters. The matter of

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Alcuin: 'Tuus Albinus' – peevish egotist? Or parrhesiast?' in R. McKitterick *et al* (eds.) *Ego Trouble: Authors and their Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2010) pp. 175 – 199.

<sup>242</sup> Tabacco *Petri Damiani Vita Beati Romualdi*, chapter lx, pp. 82-83, cited and translated in J. Howe, 'The Awesome Hermit: The Symbolic Significance of the Hermit as a Possible Research Perspective' *Numen* 30 (1983), pp. 106 – 119, p. 106.

<sup>243</sup> Blum 3, p. 75, n. 27. On the other hand, there were late antique authors who recorded tales that Theodosius consulted with hermits, and engaged with ascetic practice himself. See Augustine, *The City of God* Book V: 26: "Then, even though Maximus had been made terrible by success, Theodosius did not, even in the midst of his anxious cares, lapse into sacrilegious and unlawful superstitions. Instead, he sent to John, a hermit established in Egypt" R. Dyson (ed. and trans.), *Augustine: The City of God against the Pagans* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 233. Orosius also says of Theodosius that he was given to prayer, fasting and the singing of psalms in *Seven Books of Histories*, Book VII, 34-36.

<sup>244</sup> "vir videlicet disertus ac prudens" Reindel 2, p. 286.

provenance was clearly an important literary aspect of these historical or contemporary stories' use in his letters, but in this case it is difficult to know for certain who this Ubaldus was, and what manner of contact Damian had with him. Ubaldus appears to have had more than a passing connection to Peter Damian, and to Fonte Avellana (more than simply being an acquaintance at a council or synod). In Letter 119 (Damian's work *De Divina Omnipotentia*, 1065) he mentions that the son of the 'most noble Ubaldus' became a monk in Damian's monastery, the father having stayed at Fonte Avellana.<sup>245</sup> There is also an Avellanan charter dating from 1080,<sup>246</sup> signed by 'Offo filius Ubaldo', which at least verifies the relationship recorded in Letter 119.<sup>247</sup> Whilst it cannot be said with absolute certainty that this is the same Ubaldus who told Damian the story of Theodosius and the hermit, it does seem likely. Perhaps this is the sort of story told by local aristocrats of a favourable disposition towards Damian's eremitic institutional project.

Interestingly, in the tale itself the hermit's advice – to be merciful to the unlawful – initially brings the Empire to the point of crisis. It is only with hindsight that the hermit recants his own counsel and sends a new message by wordlessly combing out his beard and weeding his garden. This is interpreted for a dumbfounded imperial messenger by the Emperor himself, and the law of the realm is imposed with the renewed vigour that Damian hoped the margrave would display. The hermit erred in the first instance, he

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<sup>245</sup> "Puerulus quidam aetate quinquennis, Ubaldi scilicet nobilissimi viri, qui mecum degit in hermo, filius, in meo manasterio factus fuerat monachus." Reindel 3, p. 383.

<sup>246</sup> The charter records a gift to Fonte Avellana made by a family for the soul of their father. Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana*, p. 122 Whilst Damian does not go into any details of Ubaldus's stay at Fonte Avellana, it is clear the count and his family forged a multi-layered relationship with Damian and his hermitage.

<sup>247</sup> There is also a charter from 1065 – 1067, guaranteeing the rights of the monastery of St Bartholomew in Camporeggiano (one of Fonte Avellana's daughter houses), signed by an Ubaldus, Bishop of Sabina. Given that he rose to office in 1063 (after Letter 67), it may conceivably be the same person, though if that were the case, we might have expected some mention of Ubaldus's ecclesiastical rank in either the 1080 charter, or in Letter 119. Bishop Ubaldus could also have been a close relative of the homonymous count; Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana*, p. 65.

suggests, because “he was simple and pure and just about ignorant of the depravity of this world”,<sup>248</sup> a fault, or virtue, Damian clearly does not consider himself guilty of. Once again Damian is able to project his power from a position of ambiguity.

If Damian presented his advice to Godfrey as wholly disinterested the reality was, needless to say, more complicated. As we have seen, it was not uncommon for Damian to meet personally with the margrave, and whilst the margrave never gave land to Fonte Avellana or its daughter houses,<sup>249</sup> there is an example of Damian making a request of Godfrey and Beatrice with one of his own institutions in mind. In 1067, Damian sent a short but enlightening letter to Godfrey and Beatrice – Letter 148. Damian asked that they provide funds for the Abbot of the monastery of St. John at Acereta (one of Fonte Avellana’s daughter houses) who had bought a bible that he couldn’t afford. There is more than a touch of irony in the manner of the request:

This son of ours, the abbot of the monastery of St. John the Baptist, purchased a bible, but because of his poverty he was unable to pay for it, and was compelled by necessity to beg me to give him the money. Since, however, I am presently unable to help him, I take the liberty of soliciting others, so that since he did not receive assistance from us wealthy ones, namely bishops, he might at least find some comfort from you poor little folk.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> “erat simplex et purus ac mundanae propemodum pravitatis ignarus” Reindel 2, p. 286.

<sup>249</sup> Although, significantly, Beatrice and Matilda did guarantee Fonte Avellana’s property in a charter shortly after Damian’s death.

<sup>250</sup> Adapted from Blum 6, p. 169; “Filius hic noster, abbas videlicet monasterii sancti Iohannis Baptistae, bibliothecam emit, sed quia non potest precium inopia constringente persolvere, necessitate compellitur a me reddendae quantitatis auxilium flagitare. Sed quod ad praesens michi non adiacet, ab aliis exigendi licenciam tribuo, ut quod a nobis divitibus scilicet episcopis non assequitur, a vobis saltim exiguis ac pauperculis in aliquo consoletur.” Reindel 3, p. 545.

The irony may stem from Godfrey's recent military expenditure,<sup>251</sup> which Damian refers to in the letter itself:

But if someone should say, "The world is enraged against us, war has broken out, and we have no time to offer gifts (*munera*) to God," let him remember that Joshua, the commander of the Israelites fought in the desert, while on the hilltop Moses prayed with his hands raised to heaven. But as Scripture relates, whenever Moses lowered his hands Amalek had the advantage, but when he raised them, Amalek was overwhelmed and Israel defeated him.<sup>252</sup>

The Chronicle of Berthold of Reichenau relates another event of 1067: Godfrey supported the deposed simoniac bishop of Florence, Peter Mezzabarba, in seizing the lands of his former church.<sup>253</sup> Mezzabarba had attracted the opposition of the local Vallombrosan monks, under the leadership of John Gualbert (Godfrey's support of the bishop is corroborated by Abbot Andrea of Strumi's *Vita Iohannis Gualberti*).<sup>254</sup> Kathleen Cushing has shown that the political ties between the pope and the margraves

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<sup>251</sup> Berthold of Reichenau reports that in 1067 Godfrey was making a show of force against the Normans of Southern Italy. See I. Robinson (ed. and trans.) *Eleventh-Century Germany: The Swabian Chronicles* p. 122.

<sup>252</sup> Blum 6, p. 169 "Quod si dicit aliquis: Mundus adversum nos furit, bellum ingruit, et vacare nos ad offerenda Deo munera non permittit, audiat quia Iosue dux Israhel in deserto pugnabat, et Moyses in monte manibus in celum extensis orabat. Sed sicut scriptura perhibet, cum remitteret manus Moyses, superabat Amalech, cum vero manus erigeret, corruerat Amalech, et vincebat Israhel." Reindel 3, 545; Exodus 17.10-11.

<sup>253</sup> Robinson *Eleventh-Century Germany* p. 122.

<sup>254</sup> "Duke Godfrey supported the faction of Peter the simoniac, so that he threatened to slay the same monks and clerics of the opposing faction."; "favebat enim dux Gotifredus parti symoniaci Petri, ita ut minaretur interimere monachos et clericos eidem adversarios." Baethgen (ed.) 'Vita Iohannis Gualberti Auctore Andrea Abbate Strumensi' in *MGH Scriptorum* XXX.2 p. 1095.

of Tuscany made this a very delicate situation for Alexander II to resolve.<sup>255</sup> The monks in Florence calling for the bishop's deposition were visited in 1066/1067 by Damian, who attempted to assuage calls for his removal whilst acting as papal legate, as he had done in France and in Milan. He recorded his views on Mezzabarba in Letter 146 (also 1067), addressed to the *cives Florentini*, and it is a remarkably defensive piece of writing. Damian complains repeatedly of being misinterpreted by the Florentines, and implores:

May no deceitful person...dare to falsify my words or alter their meaning,  
since what I write and what I say coincide without the slightest  
discrepancy.<sup>256</sup>

He appears, moreover, to have incurred a certain amount of unpopularity in arguing that the simoniac bishop's actions remained valid, and that the people of Florence had no right to depose him, despite his guilt – arguments consistent with his earlier treatise on the *heresis* of simony, the *Liber Gratissimus*, which he cites in the letter to the Florentines. It is significant, perhaps, that the entry for 1066 in the Reichenau Chronicle, only a year before Godfrey threw in his lot with Bishop Peter, records that Damian “treated those ordained by simoniacs with too much indulgence.”<sup>257</sup>

Jestice, and more recently Cushing, have explored the complexities of Damian's intervention in Florence, particularly from the perspectives of theology and the integrity

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<sup>255</sup> Cushing ‘Of *Locustae* and Dangerous Men’, pp. 746 – 748.

<sup>256</sup> Blum 6, pp. 155 – 156; “audistis ore prolutum, videatis apicibus exaratum, et in verba nostra commentari, vel ab his discrepare, mendax quisque non audeat, dum in nobis et manus scribens et lingua loquens, indissona sibimet unitate concordant” Reindel 3, p. 533.

<sup>257</sup> Robinson, *Eleventh-Century Germany* p. 120.

of the reforming Church.<sup>258</sup> That Mezzabarba had the backing of the most powerful figures in Italy was a vital determining factor in Damian's response to the problem,<sup>259</sup> and again, the duality of his life as an eremitic churchman comes to the fore. Links between the margraves and the popes have been emphasised by Milo and Bannister, but Damian's own contact with these secular rulers is just as important. This is not to say that the margrave's involvement dictated Damian's response. Indeed, by contrast, Damian certainly wasn't averse to applying criticism (or the 'searing of a medical cure', as Damian put it)<sup>260</sup> to Godfrey's choices in ecclesiastical politics, as in Letter 154 (1068) in which Damian wrote to Godfrey to complain, in no uncertain terms, of rumours of his contact with antipope Honorius II. But it does underline the point that whenever Damian was involved in the ecclesiastical politics of northern and central Italy, which he frequently was, this inevitably meant being involved with secular political figures, be they emperors, margraves, or lower-level aristocracy. Damian may have often spoken in the eremitic/monastic discourse of separation and seclusion from 'the world', but this fact tends to obscure the reality that he dealt with the world all the same. This discourse transfigured and ordered the nature of his contact with other people, but it did not prevent such contact.

#### Damian and Just Rule:

For the substance of his advice to Godfrey, Damian again turns to history in Letter 68, though this is quite different from the quasi-ancient oral history of Theodosius. Instead, the subject is Margrave Hugh of Tuscany (d. 1001, buried in the Florentine Badia).

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<sup>258</sup> Jestic 'Peter Damian against the Reformers' pp. 67 – 94 and *Wayward Monks and the Religious*); Cushing 'Of *Locutae* and Dangerous Men'; see also Bannister *Peter Damian* pp. 227 – 247.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. Bannister pp. 242 – 243; also Y. Milo, 'Dissonance Between Papal and Local Reform Interests in Pre-Gregorian Tuscany', *Studi Medievali*, 3, ser. 20 (1979), pp. 69-86.

<sup>260</sup> *Ustio medicinalis curae* Reindel 4, p. 71.

This time Damian does not cite a source, either written or oral, but rather treats the topic as common knowledge, perhaps a folk history:

But so that we might offer you a domestic, or, so to speak, indigenous example, none appears better than Hugh of glorious memory, duke and margrave, who held in rule that which you now administer.<sup>261</sup>

We might speculate that Damian's distinction between *domesticum* and *vernaculum* was a sly dig at the fact that Godfrey was a foreigner of Lotharingian origins, who had only recently come to power in Italy through his marriage to Beatrice. At the same time, his rule in Tuscany was the product of a complex political strategy pursued by the house of Canossa, of which Beatrice was now the lynchpin, whereby the family ruled both the inherited lands in the Po valley and the public office of the March of Tuscany in ways that became increasingly intertwined from the rule of Boniface (*dux et marchio*)<sup>262</sup> to that of Matilda, by whose time it was held by hereditary right.<sup>263</sup> By harking back to the rule of the Margrave Hugh, from whom neither Godfrey nor Beatrice were descended, Damian would appear to be reacting against this new phenomenon to some degree, emphasising the public nature of the office and downplaying the dynastic. Chris Wickham has argued that Tuscany's 'statehood' last longer than in other areas of northern and central Italy, and, even though this was disintegrating by the middle of the

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<sup>261</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, pp. 82 – 83; "Ut autem domesticum tibi vel, ut ita loquar, vernaculum praebeamus exemplum, nemo melius occurrit, quam gloriosae memoriae Hugo dux et marchio, qui eum, quo tu nunc fungeris, optinuit principatum." Reindel 2, pp. 292 – 293.

<sup>262</sup> It is interesting that this is the same title that Damian uses for Hugh in this letter. Perhaps this was simply because of his temporary title as Duke of Spoleto, or perhaps it was a reflection of Boniface's more recent styling. The way he addresses Godfrey in his letters varies: in Letter 67 it is *dux*, in Letter 68 *marchio*, and in Letter 154 *dux et marchio*. It may be a result of the ambiguity in the exact style of Godfrey's rule over the march.

<sup>263</sup> R. Ricci, 'La Transizione Postcarolingia nel Regno Italico (888 – 1115) e il Principato Territoriale' *Società e Storia* 125, (2009) pp. 395 – 422, esp. pp. 405 – 413. Cf. G. Tabacco, *The Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy: Structures of Political Rule* trans. R. Jensen (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 162 – 163.

century, Damian's appeals to Godfrey for just rule do indeed reveal a lingering belief on Damian's part in the margrave's public power, which has no comparison in Damian's letters concerning the Ravenna region.<sup>264</sup> If he was sceptical of the Canossan project, however, and expresses a regional political awareness, he does not in these letters anticipate anything like the dissolution of the march, which happened upon the death of Matilda – the cities of Tuscany, the new loci of power,<sup>265</sup> do not feature in this letter, save for a mention of Hugh's burial in the Badia in Florence.

Aside from being an outsider, Godfrey had in fact, through his commitments to his possessions in Germany, spent several years away from Italy waging war on the Emperor and his allies in Lotharingia, which may have been the root cause of Damian's accusations of neglect. Damian's assertion that Hugh, in the name of the proper administration of justice, refused to overburden himself was more direct:

But when he considered that since he could not actively rule both [territories in eastern and western Italy] because of the dishonesty of those who live unjustly, he voluntarily yielded the March of Camerino with the Duchy of Spoleto to the Emperor by a judgment of renunciation, but he reserved Tuscany for himself by right.<sup>266</sup>

Damian's insistence that this was a voluntary submission may be suspect, but the story is nonetheless pointedly chosen: Godfrey had himself been granted the Duchy of

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<sup>264</sup> C. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society, 400 – 1000* (London, 1981), pp. 183 – 185.

<sup>265</sup> The Canossa family itself made Lucca its centre in the march, but this city does not seem to have been important to Damian. See Tabacco 'Northern and Central Italy', p. 82.

<sup>266</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, p. 83; "Sed cum perpenderet, quia propter improbitatem iniuste viventium strenue regere utramque non posset, ultronee renuntiationis arbitrio cessit imperatori marchiam Camerini cum Spoletano ducatu, iuri vero proprio Tusciam reservavit." Reindel 3, p. 293.



Spoletto in 1057, by his brother Pope Stephen IX, who had previously held the territory. Overall, the number of provinces that answered to him in both Italy and Lotharingia was greater than the combination of responsibilities which Hugh apparently found overwhelming.<sup>267</sup> The stories that Damian tells of Hugh are a strange, semi-hagiographic collection, and their esoteric nature seems to underline the local-hero aspect of what Damian was trying to present. As a boy Hugh miraculously identified his estranged father, despite never having seen him, and thus cleared his mother of accusations of adultery. As he lay on his deathbed a log on the fire burned with the words “The Margrave Hugh lived fifty years”,<sup>268</sup> which onlookers mistakenly took as a sign that he would live on. Damian also included some tales that we might see as imparting advice more directly relevant to the messages of these two letters. Hugh, for example, avenged the murder of the Prince of Capua with swift and violent justice, not sparing the sword when, in Damian’s view, it was due. And, in one of the very few examples of Damian even mentioning an individual peasant, Hugh is said to have often gone riding without his retinue, in order to discover his subjects’ true opinion of him:

He would then urge the farmers and shepherds with these words: “What do you think about the man they call marquis? Isn’t he cruel and wicked in oppressing the poor, ruining the land, and wasting all the income from his property?” To which they replied, “Not at all,” they said, “not at all. What you are saying, fellow, is totally false. There is no power anywhere on earth that so avoids violence and destruction, that rules the people under him with

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<sup>267</sup> Perhaps Damian’s warnings reflect the unusually diffuse nature of landed power in eleventh-century Tuscany, which was characterised not by large estates, but by looser associations of petty landowners? See C. Wickham, ‘Land Sales and Land Market in Tuscany in the Eleventh Century’ in *Land and Power: Studies in Italian and European Social History 400 – 1200* (London, 1994) – trans from *Quaderni Storici* LXV (1987) pp. 355 – 377; Provero, ‘Forty Years of Rural History for the Italian Middle Ages’, pp. 141 – 172.

<sup>268</sup> “Hugo marchio quinquaginta annos vixit” Reindel 2, p. 296.

such peace and security. We hope he lives forever to take care of the poor, and may his years be long as he provides for all his subjects.<sup>269</sup>

Damian, moreover, highlights Hugh's commitment to giving generously to, and founding, religious institutions, which is something I will look at in more detail later in this chapter.

These two letters may appeal to those who see the eleventh-century reforms as primarily movements of demarcation and separation between different groups and their appropriate spheres of activity.<sup>270</sup> Damian's arguments mark out different obligations of mercy and forgiveness for clergy and lay lords. Forgiveness is for priests,<sup>271</sup> not for princes:

All members of the church are not assigned the same office, for one duty is proper to a bishop [*sacerdos*], another to a judge [*iudex*]. The former must be the soul of compassion, fondling the Church's children like a forgiving mother, always gathering them to her breast and nourishing them with the richness of her teaching. But it is the duty of the latter to punish the guilty, snatching the innocent from their hands; to hew to the line of right order and justice and not grow slack in his zeal for imposing legal sanctions, nor stray from the path of equity, and not weaken his inclination to impose the

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<sup>269</sup> Blum 3, pp. 84 – 85; “Et tunc agricolas vel opiliones his compellabat affatibus: ‘Quid vobis’ inquit, ‘videtur de marchione isto, quem dicunt? Numquid non crudelis et inpius pauperes opprimit, terram dissipat, et cuncta ditionis suae bona profligat?’ Ad quod illi: ‘Absit’ aiunt, ‘absit, falsum est penitus, homo, quod loqueris. Non est enim potestas aliqua super terram, quae sic violentiis et rapinis abstineat, quae in tanta pace et securitate subiectum sibi populum regat. Vivat optamus, vivat illa potestas ad refrigerium pauperum, et prospere floreat ad omnium custodiam subiectorum.’” Reindel 2, p. 295.

<sup>270</sup> See, for example D. Elliot *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, 1993)

<sup>271</sup> And, given that Damian admonished the Florentine hermit Teuzo for being too harsh with his monastic brethren, this counts for ascetics also. See Letter 44.

severity of the Law...Therefore, if the prince is God's agent who dispenses retribution to the offender, he who gently pats criminals and villains on the head is undoubtedly the agent of the devil.<sup>272</sup>

Holders of secular power that exercise such mercy are not pleasing God, Damian argues, but are dealing in false goodness (*falsus pietas*). He backs up his argument with examples from scripture of the exercise of juridical violence.<sup>273</sup> Likewise in Letter 68 Damian writes again to Margrave Godfrey of Tuscany and counsels him: "Refuse to be too pious".<sup>274</sup> Here he draws upon the sources collected in Burchard of Worms's *Decretum* in support of *corporale supplicium*.<sup>275</sup> Much of this was expressed in surprisingly violent language, and he ends Letter 67 with an exceptionally brutal piece of *Realpolitik*. Otto III made it one of his first actions as ruler to blind three of the Empire's most prominent political figures, the counts Rodulfus, Raimundus and Arimundus, so Damian told Godfrey with thorough approval. For, as he said, "Six eyes were put out, and to a whole realm peace was restored."<sup>276</sup>

It was around the same time as these two letters to Godfrey that Damian wrote to the Countess Beatrice. He only wrote to Beatrice during her marriage to Godfrey: there are no letters to her either before (she was married to Boniface III 1037 – 1052) or after

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<sup>272</sup> Blum 3, p. 72; "Non omnia membra aecclesiae uno funguntur officio, aliud nempe sacerdoti, aliud competit iudici. Iste siquidem visceribus debet pietatis affluere et in maternae misericordiae gremio sub exuberantibus doctrinae semper uberibus filios confovere. Illius autem officium est, ut reos puniat, et ex eorum manibus eripiat innocentes, ut vigorem rectitudinis et iustitiae teneat, et a zelo sanctionum legalium non tepescat, ut ab aequitatis linea non declinet, ut legitimi vigoris genium non enervet...Si ergo Dei minister est, qui mala facientes in iram vindicat, diaboli proculdubio minister est, qui criminosos ac reprobos suaviter palpat." Reindel 2, pp. 282 – 283. As to Damian's use of the term *iudex* here, in Chapter 1 we saw that *iudices* were men of authority in the urban landscape, but here it surely refers to the margrave's duties of judgement. Damian makes reference to Adelaide carrying out such duties in Letter 114.

<sup>273</sup> See Blum 3, pp. 73 – 75.

<sup>274</sup> "Noli esse nimium pius." Reindel 2, p. 290.

<sup>275</sup> Reindel 2, pp. 291 – 292; see Ryan *St. Peter Damian and his Canonical Sources* pp. 92 – 93, no. 179.

<sup>276</sup> Blum 3, p. 78; "In evulsione sex oculorum unum pacatum est regnum." Reindel 2, p. 289.

Godfrey's death in 1069. In Letter 51, dated to 1057, Damian wrote to Beatrice (now, since 1054, married to Godfrey of Lorraine), celebrating the fact that Beatrice and Godfrey have decided to live in a celibate marriage.<sup>277</sup> Although Dyan Elliot suggests that Damian's approval is 'reluctant', particularly over the matter of Beatrice not having any more children, the letter sees Damian lend full support. Elliot argues that the eleventh-century reform movements were "responsible for the construction of ambitious formulations of society that attempted to raise rigid boundaries between its various constituents. The latter part of the century is dominated by the struggle of the Gregorian reformers to separate the clergy from the laity, using sexual activity as the point of demarcation."<sup>278</sup> Whilst there is much in this (Damian himself wrote that purity had to be the defining feature of the clergy, as tribal identity was to the Levites<sup>279</sup>), Elliot's claim that this new demarcation led reformers like Damian to discourage ascetic behaviour in lay-persons is not borne out by this letter. Elliot quotes only the first sentence of the passage below, and the second quite drastically changes the tone:<sup>280</sup>

With regard to the mystery of mutual continence, however, which, as God is my witness, you are observing with one another, I must say that for some time I have been inclined to have two views, namely that your husband joyfully offered this gift [*munus*] of chastity, but that you, because you wished to have children, did not gladly go along. But when your exalted husband recently informed me at the tomb of the blessed prince of the

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<sup>277</sup> It is notable that Damian approved of their celibacy despite the lack of a male heir. By this point her son Frederick had already died (1055) and so Matilda was Beatrice's only surviving child.

<sup>278</sup> Elliot, *Spiritual Marriage*, p. 94

<sup>279</sup> see O. Blum *Letters* Vol. 3 Letter 112 p. 261

<sup>280</sup> D. Elliot *Spiritual Marriage* p. 97, n. 11. See also Letter 17 (Blum 1, pp. 145 – 158) in which Damian encourages a layman of Ravenna to observe the canonical hours. Damian also makes reference to the Duke's 'distinguished and most chaste marriage' (*honestus ac pudicissimus thalamus*) in Letter 154.

apostles about your holy desire and your purpose to observe perpetual chastity, I exclaimed, “I was glad when they said unto me,” [Psalm 121] and shouted with joy.<sup>281</sup>

Again, Godfrey’s presence in Rome shows the continuing involvement of the margraves in the business of the Church. It has long been understood that Damian’s writings did not call for such a rigorous separation of Church and secular government (more particularly the Imperial government) as did some of his contemporaries in the upper echelons of the reform movements.<sup>282</sup> But this does underline that, despite the themes in his letters to Godfrey, interpreting the reforms as wholly a series of acts of cleavage is insufficient.

There is a certain amount of cross-over in Damian’s correspondence to Beatrice and Godfrey. Where, as we have seen, he wrote to the husband with the examples of Theodosius (Letter 67) and Margrave Hugh (Letter 68), to the wife he held up Galla (wife of Theodosius) and Guilla (mother of Hugh). Was Damian trying to get them to talk to each other about certain themes? To become versed in the same historically-framed language of power and behaviour? Damian also congratulated Godfrey on their celibate marriage, in Letter 68, and so again these letters tie together, presenting an intriguing little collection where the emphasis was very much on Godfrey and Beatrice as a couple. I will look at the example of Guilla in more detail later in this chapter, as it

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<sup>281</sup> Adapted from Blum 2, p. 336; “De misterio autem mutuae continentiae, quam inter vos Deo teste servatis, diu me fateor duplex opinio tenuit, ut virum quidem tuum arbitrarer hilariter hoc pudicitiae munus offerre, te vero gignendae prolis desiderio non hoc libenter admittere. Sed cum gloriosus idem vir nuper michi ante sacrosanctum corpus beati apostolorum principis intimasset sanctum desiderium tuum et pudicitiae perpetuo conservandae propositum, fateor: Laetatus sum in his, quae dicta sunt michi et exultavi vehementer.” Reindel 2, p. 133; For Damian’s presence at the synods see Lucchesi *Vita* nos. 175 and 203, c.f. Blum 2, p. 336, n. 5.

<sup>282</sup> See Chapter 4, pp. 198 – 202, also Whitney, ‘Peter Damiani and Humbert’, pp. 225 – 247.

relates primarily to the Beatrice's gifts of property to churches. As for the Empress Galla, we can see that Damian used her story, taken from Cassiodorus's *Historia Tripartia*, as a telling model for Beatrice. Her most eye-catching attributes were her generosity and her hospitality – helping the poor and the sick, and not delegating to others those fundamental charitable duties. But, Damian continues:

Nor was she satisfied to stand alone in performing these hospitable deeds, but also urged her husband the emperor to engage in the same acts of sacred devotion...Therefore we can say of this woman that, completely unlike the first woman, she spoke in a different way and was quite the opposite in her actions. For the latter first ate the forbidden fruit and then persuaded her husband to do the same. But this woman set an example which her husband might imitate and offered him words of holy advice.<sup>283</sup>

A side effect of this marital focus (emphasised by the dual request made in Letter 148) is Damian's relative lack of anxiety over contact with Beatrice. On the other hand, it is not clear whether Damian and Beatrice met in person, and as Damian suggested in a letter to Countess Guilla of Monte S. Maria (Letter 143, c. 1066), the epistolary form was somewhat 'safer' for the hermit:

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<sup>283</sup> Blum 2, p. 338; "Nec sufficiebat illi, ut ipsa dumtaxat operibus pietatis insisteret, nisi et imperatorem, virum videlicet suum, ad eiusdem sanctae devotionis instantiam provocaret...De hac itaque muliere dicere possumus, quia primae mulieri prorsus absimilis et diversa loquitur, et contraria, quam illa fecit, operatur. Illa siquidem prohibitum pomum prius a comedit, deinde viro, ut et ipse comederet, persuasit. Ista vero viro suo et imitandae conversationis exemplum et sanctae exhortationis ministravit eloquium." Reindel 2, pp. 134 – 135.

Since it is better to be indisputably ignorant of a matter over which conflict might arise, than always struggling to forget it, it is safer for me to converse in writing with young women in whose presence I am apprehensive.<sup>284</sup>

Whether Damian met with Beatrice or not, his letters to her and her husband are noticeably less self-conscious (or, at least, less outwardly concerned with the opinions of others) than his letter to the widowed Duchess Adelaide of Turin, to which I will now turn.

#### Damian and Adelaide:

Damian's letter to Adelaide of Turin (Letter 114, 1064) is very different from Letter 51, mainly because Adelaide was the sole ruler of a vast collection of territories (in so far as someone could be a 'sole ruler' in eleventh-century Italy), having been widowed three times. The letter is also a rare example of Damian addressing an independent female ruler, and he is at pains to explain the concentration of power in the hands of a woman. That is not to say that he never commented on the nature of male power. As we have seen, he consistently put worldly power in the context of its dispensation from God, and the characteristics and abilities fitting for a ruler within the same scheme. This saw perhaps its clearest expression in Letter 110, written to an apparently wealthy bishop in 1064. Here Damian suggests that "those who are rich should be regarded as dispensers rather than possessors, and should not consider what they have to be their own".<sup>285</sup> We should consider this context as we turn to his characterisations of female power, but

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<sup>284</sup> Blum 6, p. 143; "Quoniam rei ex qua conflictus oboritur, melius est gratuitam ignorantiam possidere quam de comparanda semper oblivione configere, iuenculis mulieribus, quarum formidamus aspectus, tuto litterarum praebeamus alloquium." Reindel 3, p. 522.

<sup>285</sup> Blum 5, p. 230; "Qui ergo divites sunt, dispensatores potius iubentur esse, quam possessores, et non proprii iuris debent deputare, quod habent" Reindel 3, p. 227.

Damian seems to have needed to explain the rule of women in a way that was simply unnecessary in his letters to men. On occasion this entailed a rhetorical bleeding of female power's femininity, as in Letter 64 to Queen Anne of France, which Damian ghost-wrote for Pope Nicholas II in 1059, where Damian gave "proper thanks to God, omnipotent author of good will, because we hear that the mature strength of manliness lives in a feminine bosom."<sup>286</sup> As the letter asked first and foremost that Anne endeavour to influence her husband, being *virilis* could be important even in Damian's discussion of female roles. In the letter to Adelaide, Damian takes a rather different tack. Much of Damian's argument rests on the citation of biblical precedents. Establishing her right to rule he compared her with the 'prophetess Deborah' [Judg 4:5]:

Of her we read, that "she presided as a judge over the people, and the Israelites went up to her for justice." Following her example, you too govern your land without a man's help, and those who wish to settle their disputes, flock to you for your legal decision.<sup>287</sup>

This underlines the anomalous features of this letter, as it takes a different approach from that of other letters written by Damian to lay magnates – in particular the margraves of Tuscany. Damian returns to comment on her rule as a woman; it is evidently a problem that needs to be negotiated in some way, rather than simply being the *a priori* that the margrave's power is:

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<sup>286</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, p. 21; "Bonae voluntatis auctori omnipotenti Deo dignas gratias agimus, quia in femineo pectore virile vivere virtutum robur audimus." Reindel 2, p. 226.

<sup>287</sup> Blum 5, p. 295; "De illa quippe legitur, quia iudicabat populum, ascendebantque ad eam filii Israel in omne iudicium. Ad cuius exemplum tu quoque terram sine virili regis auxilio, et ad te confluent, qui litibus suis imponere legalis sententiae calculum concupiscent." Reindel 3, p. 297.



Certainly, as I pass over many other things, it seemed to me that honey was flowing from the honeycomb when this truly humble remark came from your lips, “Why should one wonder, father, that almighty God saw fit to grant me, his unworthy servant, some small degree of power over men, since at times he endows even a despicable herb with wonderful qualities?”<sup>288</sup>

Since Adelaide had already been ruling alone for several years by this point, Damian’s arguments were probably more relevant to himself and the clerical opposition to the letter that he anticipated than to Adelaide herself. He does not even truly address the knotty problem of a woman essentially ruling a public office.<sup>289</sup> Nor does he press Adelaide on the absence of a husband. He counsels her, since, so he wrote, “I know you to be worried about repeated doubling of marriage”,<sup>290</sup> that remarriage did not preclude entry into heaven (quoting Matt 22.30). Damian does not ‘encourage’ it, but his stance appears pragmatic. Given that it did not appear as a problem in his contact with Beatrice, who likewise married multiple times, perhaps Adelaide was genuinely concerned about this point. However, he concludes that “Jesus is such a bridegroom that whomsoever he embraces with his love is restored to lily-white chastity”,<sup>291</sup> so it may have been that Damian incorrectly foresaw a religious life for Adelaide, of the sort that (as I shall suggest in the final chapter of this thesis) he envisioned for the Empress

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<sup>288</sup> Blum 5, p. 296; “Certe ut multa praeteream, tanquam ex quodam mellis favo visa est michi haec stilla diffluere, cum hoc verae humilitatis verbum de tuo contigit ore prodire: Quid mirum, pater, si Deus omnipotens michi vilissimae ancillae suae quantulamcunque conferre dignatus est inter homines potestatem, qui contemptibili cuilibet herbae mirabilem aliquando praebebat inesse virtutem?” Reindel 3, p. 298.

<sup>289</sup> The title of margrave actually passed around the males of the family, whilst Adelaide continued ruling. That Damian went straight to Adelaide suggests his acceptance of this *de facto* rule. See Ricci ‘La Transizione’ p. 411. Damian refers to Adelaide as *ducissa*.

<sup>290</sup> “te novi de iterata coniugii geminatione suspectam” Reindel 3, p. 304.

<sup>291</sup> Blum 5, p. 303; “Jesus enim talis est sponsus, ut quamcunque suae karitatis ulnis amplectitur, protinus in ea floridae castitatis mundicia reparatur” Reindel 3, p. 304.

Agnes and Countess Blanca once their children had come of age. Beyond her capacity to rule, Damian seems more concerned for Adelaide's holiness than was the case in his letters to Godfrey. He goes on to deconstruct Deborah's sitting beneath a palm tree 'between Ramah and Bethel' – that is, between the heights of religiosity (Ramah) and the house of God (Bethel). Thus, as Deborah's equivalent, he encourages Adelaide:

Therefore, you too should dwell beneath the palm tree, and always meditate on the victory of Christ's cross above you. Take your seat also between Ramah and Bethel, that you may not be engaged with the land, that is, with earthly things, but that with the apostles you may live in the upper room, and with the holy widow, Anna, you may always spend your time in the temple.<sup>292</sup>

Keeping religious matters before her brings us to the primary purpose of the letter, which was to encourage the duchess to participate in the reform of the dioceses located in her territories. Damian emphasised that unity between Adelaide and the bishops will keep the reforming effort on track, and so it is easy to see this letter as a call for a truly collaborative reform.<sup>293</sup> This bold call for aristocratic involvement in the process of church reform has also been portrayed as an affirmation of the 'marchional' church system, pursued by both Adelaide and her father Olderico Manfredi, who forged close links to the bishoprics and monasteries in his territories.<sup>294</sup> There is certainly an explicit

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<sup>292</sup> Blum 5, p. 295; 'Habita ergo et tu sub palma, semperque super te crucis Christi contemplare victoriam. Sede etiam inter Rama et Bethel, ut non solo, hoc est terrenis, inhaereas, sed cum apostolis in cenaculo et cum Anna sancta vidua converseris semper in templo.' Reindel 3, p. 297.

<sup>293</sup> See, for example, C. Anderson, 'When Magisterium becomes Imperium: Peter Damian on the Accountability of Bishops for Scandal' *Theological Studies* 65 (2004), pp. 741 – 766 esp. pp. 759 – 763.

<sup>294</sup> He secured Asti for his brother Alric and was able to build castles on church lands. He also had close links with local monasteries and canonries, and these policies were continued by Adelaide. See G. Andenna, 'Adelaide e la sua Famiglia tra Politica e Riforma Ecclesiastica' *Segusium* 32 (1992), pp. 77 – 102, esp. pp. 92 – 93.

acceptance of Adelaide's regional influence over the church in the letter, and this is how the copyists sought to record it, adding the superscript (which paraphrases a passage from the letter itself):

This [letter] unites the church of Turin with the most illustrious duchess, so that they might go headlong together against those defending the extravagance of clerics.<sup>295</sup>

The idea of unity is strongly emphasised in the early stages of the letter as well. This complicates the 'separation of spheres' narrative, and from the start this letter betrays all the complexity to be expected from the eremitic-cardinal-legate asking for the duchess's participation in ecclesiastical reform. This was not, in fact, Damian's first intervention in Turin, as shortly before he had written to Bishop Cunibert of Turin (Letter 112), also on the subject of nicolaitism. Both of these letters, indeed, came out of Damian's personal presence in the march of Turin following his legation to France in aid of Cluny, and Damian appears to have taken his passage through the territory as an opportunity to inspect the affairs of the region's churches. In writing to Adelaide Damian made direct reference to his letter to Bishop Cunibert, suggesting that it was only through fear of scandal that he did not send it to Adelaide herself. As so often with religious men tackling the topics of sex and women, scandal lurked in the wings:

Whatever I wrote to the venerable bishop of Turin about the harm done to chastity, which this same queen of virtues suffers at the hands of clerics, I

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<sup>295</sup> This was added to the large eleventh-century collections, C2, V1, U1, by scribes writing shortly before or after Damian's death. As was so widely applied, perhaps it was included in the now-lost contemporary material? "Hic Taurinensem episcopum cum clarissima duce confoederat, ut praecipiti clericorum luxuriae invicem se munientes occurrant." Reindel 3, p. 296.

had previously determined to write to you, except that I feared the calumny of these same insulting clerics. Indeed, they would have complained and said, “See, how shamefully and inhumanely he acts while preparing to destroy us, he who is unwilling to discuss this matter cautiously and discreetly with bishops or with other men of the Church, but brazenly publicised to women what should have been handled in the sacristy.” Therefore, fearing this eventuality, I altered the name of the addressee, and what I planned to write to you, I sent to him instead. He, however, is the bishop of only one diocese; but in your lands, which lie in two expansive kingdoms, Italy and Burgundy, there are many bishops holding office. And so it did not seem improper that I should write especially to you on the incontinence of clerics, since I felt that you possessed adequate means to correct the situation. This is particularly so, for which I praise God, since manly strength rules in a womanly breast, and you are more richly endowed with a will to do good will than with earthly power. Therefore, because in the words of the pagan poet, “This person whom I have made ready as a defender has need of a protector,” [Terence, *Eunuchus*, 4.6.770] I beg you and encourage you to join with the lord bishop, so that through your mutual efforts of defence you may take on the fight against the forces of impurity that are attacking Christ.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, pp. 294 – 295; “Quicquid de castitatis iniuria, quam eadem regina virtutum a clericis patitur, venerabili Taurinensi episcopo scrips, tibi scribendum ante decreveram, nisi eorundem clericorum insugillantium calumpniam formidasset. Expostularent enim ac dicerent: Ecce, quam inpie, quam inhumane parat nos iste confundere, qui non cum episcopis, non cum aecclesiasticis viris super nostro negotio caute vult ac modeste disserere, sed quod in sacrario tractandum erat, non veretur feminis publicare. Hoc itaque metuens personam mutavi, et quod tibi concoeperam, illi potius desti navi. Ille tamen unius aecclesiae cathedram tenet, in ditione vero tua, quae in duorum regnorum Italiae scilicet et Burgundiae porrigitur, non breve confinium plures episcopantur antistites. Ideoque non indignum videbatur, ut tibi potissimum de clericorum incontinentia scriberem, cui videlicet ad corrigendum idoneam sentio non deesse virtutem. Presertim quod ad laudem Dei dixerim, cum virile robur femineo regnet in pectore, et ditior sis bona voluntate quam terrena potestate. Unde quia iuxta poetae gentilis

It is doubtful that Damian simply scratched out Adelaide's name and replaced it with Cunibert's, as, as pointed out below, the two letters are actually very different in their approach, but the fact that he had to justify his position in this way is hardly surprising given that he himself admonished those who sought to solve the Church's problems in the wider world (as with Peter Mezzabarba). However, something that Damian does not make explicit, but which nevertheless forms the backdrop to his approach to Adelaide is that nicolaitism is rather different from sodomy and simony, the two other clerical heresies that Damian wrote on his letters. Both these later sins are wholly 'in-house' affairs,<sup>297</sup> whilst clerical marriage has two perpetrators – one lay, one clerical – and so it necessitates (or, at least, encourages) a collaborative approach to rectify the problem.

Even so, Damian did propose an ecclesiastically led solution to Bishop Cunibert (which, incidentally, is another reason to doubt that the letter was originally intended for Adelaide). This section begins with perhaps his most cited passage on clerical wives:

In plenary synod it was Pope Leo of blessed memory, who decreed that whenever these damnable women, living with priests as their mistresses, were living within the walls of the city of Rome, they were to be condemned from then on to be *ancillae* of the Lateran palace. I have also decided to publish this salutary law, so replete with justice and equity, throughout all dioceses, so that after first hearing the decree of the Apostolic See, every

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eloquium, Opus est huic tutore, quem defensorem paro, hortor et peto, ut tu domno iungaris episcopo, quatinus mutuae virtutis fulti munimine furentis in Christum luxuriae valeatis aciem debellare.” Reindel 3, pp. 296 – 297.

<sup>297</sup> At least, Damian only considers 'in house' sodomy in the *Liber Gomorrhianus*. With regards to simony, the idea that it was not a matter for those outside the ecclesiastical hierarchy rested on Damian's not uncontroversial view that the quality of the actions and sacrifices of those tainted by simony remained unaffected by their sin, as we saw in the case of Mezzabarba.

bishop may acquire as *famulae* of his diocese all the women in his territory that he finds living in sacrilegious union with priests.<sup>298</sup>

But did Damian really expect this to happen? Given that much of his writing displays a desire to avoid scandal, would he even countenance the prospect of filling every bishop's palace with dozens of apparently licentious and predatory women?<sup>299</sup> Perhaps we should take this as a comment by Damian on the huge loss of social status that these women would have endured, in any case, on having their marriages stripped of their legitimacy. The idea to enslave clerical wives (or, rather, those who 'act as wives' – Damian is careful never to acknowledge their union as even potentially legitimate) does not surface again in Letter 114. In fact most of the statements are characteristically vague, but one passage does delve deeper, and confirms that, although this was a call for reforming unity, it was not an invitation for overlapping jurisdictions:

Thus the bishop, in fact, all the bishops who live in the lands that you administer, should enforce episcopal discipline on the clerics, and you should apply the vigour of your worldly power to the women.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Blum 5, p. 278; "In plenaria plane synodo sanctae memoriae Leo papa constituit, ut quaecunque damnabiles feminae intra Romana moenia reperirentur presbyteris prostitutae, ex tunc et deinceps Lateranensi palatio adiudicarentur ancillae. Quod videlicet salutare statutum aequitatis iustitiaeque plenissimum, nos etiam per omnes aecclesias propagandum esse decernimus, quatinus percepto prius apostolicae sedis edicto unusquisque episcopus aecclesiae suae vendicet famulas, quas in sua parroechia deprehenderit sacrilega presbyteris ammixtione substratas." Reindel pp. 280 – 281.

<sup>299</sup> A note on Damian's discussion on clerical wives in Letter 112: His rhetoric has been taken as evidence for his exceptional hatred of women. Parts of it are certainly vitriolic, as he addresses them as "tasty tidbits of the devil", "venom of the mind" "leeches" and so on (and this all in a single sentence). But this must be balanced with the milder sections of the same letter. He warns the women of the seduction and lies of lusty clerics, spreading the blame between the parties ("Therefore, repel these crafty liars as if they were poisonous serpents, and be quick to free yourselves, as you would from the cruel jaws of a lion" Blum 5, p. 279) and emphasises their opportunity for redemption. Rather than unleashing a pent-up hatred of the opposite sex, he was, it seems, playing 'good cop/bad cop' with himself.

<sup>300</sup> Blum 5, p. 297; "Quatinus et episcopus, immo omnes episcopi, qui in amministrationis tuae finibus commorantur, sacerdotali clericos disciplina coerceant, et tu in feminas vigorem terrenae potestatis extendas." Reindel 3, p. 299.

The united front is important, then, so that both sides of the problem can be dealt with – the lay half in the lay courts, and the ecclesiastical in the ecclesiastical. Whilst there seems to be an implicit expectation that Adelaide could put pressure on the bishops that tended to the flocks under her jurisdiction, the primary role of the duchess laid out here was less controversial. Indeed, having a powerful woman deal with women seems positively engineered to avoid scandal. It also proves that the women in question did exist (that is, they were not just ‘women to think with’), and there was an expectation that they would have to be dealt with in some way. Damian’s legal reasoning was that “There were only three kinds of women whom God knew; more than these did not come to his attention. In Mary he knew virgins, in Anna widows and in Susanna, wives.”<sup>301</sup> Clerical wives’ marriages not being valid, they could not be identified by any of these categories. Damian continued to find biblical passages in support of his plan, and the focus remained (broadly) on the duchess’s responsibilities towards the wives of clerics, rather than clerics themselves:

And as Heber’s wife, Jael, placed the tent-peg on the skull of Sisera, struck it with a hammer, and pierced both temples [Judg 4:21], you too must pierce the head of the devil with the sign of the cross, and destroy the source of all impurity, who prevents clerics from participating in the joys of heaven.<sup>302</sup>

What Damian didn’t say is what he expected Adelaide to actually do with the women that she might find living with the clergy of her territories. There is a hint in Letter 112

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<sup>301</sup> Blum 5, p. 297; “Tres quippe tantummodo feminas Deus novit, quae his plures sunt, in eius adhuc notitiam non venerunt. Novit enim virgines cum Maria, viduas cum Anna, coniuges cum Susanna.” Reindel 3, p. 299

<sup>302</sup> Blum 5, p. 297; “Et sicut Iahel uxor Aber tabernaculi sui clavum super Sisarae cerebrum posuit malleoque percussit ac tympanum in utrumque transfixit, ita tu signo crucis diaboli verticem transfode, auctoremque luxuria, qui clericos a caelestibus gaudiis excludit, elide.” Reindel 3, p. 299.

that perhaps the way forward for these women is to enter the religious life. First, he quotes Jeremiah 3:1, suggesting that the priests' wives are no longer of marriageable status:

It is commonly said: If a man put away his wife, and she go from him and marry another man, shall he return to her any more? Shall not that woman be polluted and defiled? But thou hast prostituted thyself to many lovers. Nevertheless return to me saith the Lord, and I will receive thee.

And he continues:

What a fortunate exchange! When you break away from this union with unchaste clerics, the angels will applaud as you enter the bedchamber of the Heavenly Spouse.<sup>303</sup>

Is this bedchamber a figure for the cloister? It would seem the most sensible solution to the problem (a real one, as we saw in Letter 114) of what to do with priests' wives, and this period coincides with a spike in the graph of female monastic foundations in northern Italy.<sup>304</sup> That anti-nicolaitism legislation appeared in the Lateran Councils of the twelfth-century, and even prosecution against concubinage remained difficult, it seems that Damian's reticence in putting forward a coherent plan for dealing with priests' wives may simply reflect the fact that he had no such plan.

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<sup>303</sup> Blum 5, p. 281; "Felix tale commercium, quia cum inpudicos clericos a vestra copulatione divellit, plaudentibus angelis caelestis sponsi thalamus introitis." Blum 3, p. 284.

<sup>304</sup> S. Wemple, 'Female Monasticism in Italy and its Comparison with France and Germany from the Ninth through the Eleventh Century' in W. Affeldt (ed.) *Frauen in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter* (Berlin, 1990), pp. 291-310, p. 298.



### Damian, the Margraves, and Monastic Property:

Rather more successful was Damian's advice to Adelaide that she should give to the monastery of Fruttuaria – she gave handsomely to the institution, favoured too by the Empress Agnes, over the next few years.<sup>305</sup> This request was far from unique. Whatever the core content of each individual letter to a margrave or countess, time and again Damian turns to the issue of monastic property. Naturally, the importance of lay aristocrats to the fortunes of religious institutions (particularly to those deemed to have been 'reforming') has long been recognised in the historiography.<sup>306</sup> From his earliest recorded contact with the rulers of Tuscany property was a key concern, though it should be noted that this concern was divided between two distinct sides of what was admittedly the same coin: requests that the magnates should protect the legitimate property of monastic houses, and advice that they should be generous in their gifts of both land and liturgical items. His requests ranged from general exhortations to favour religious property to specific requests to protect or support particular institutions. Apart from the request made to Beatrice and Godfrey of Tuscany to help St. John's in Acereta afford a lectionary,<sup>307</sup> Damian never petitioned on behalf of the institutions under his jurisdiction. Rather, it was often monasteries that had given him hospitality for a period of time. This was certainly the case in Letter 2, to Boniface III, in the early 1040s. Indeed, Damian wrote to Margrave Boniface primarily regarding his relationship with the monastery of St. Vincent at Furlo Pass, located around 15 miles north of Fonte

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<sup>305</sup> Andenna 'Adelaide' pp. 95 – 96.

<sup>306</sup> See J. Howe, 'The Nobility's Reform of the Medieval Church' *American Historical Review* 93 (1988), pp. 317 – 339 (in which he cites Damian's *Vita Beati Romualdi* as evidence for noble involvement in the relative success of the Camaldolian houses); M. Miller, *The formation of a medieval church: ecclesiastical change in Verona, 950-1150* (New York, 2003).

<sup>307</sup> Nor did the margraves of Tuscany appear to favour Fonte Avellana, at least not during Damian's lifetime.

Avellana, on the Via Flaminia between Cagli and the east coast. Damian exhorts him to protect all the monasteries in his lands from his own men, but particularly St. Vincent:

But now, for God's sake, I beg you and humbly request that you stretch forth your hand to protect the monasteries that lie in your area and not allow them to be plundered or molested by the many troops under your command. Above all I beseech your excellency to have special regard for the monastery of St. Vincent. Restore into its lawful power the estates held by usurpers, and defend them with your protecting shield from all men.<sup>308</sup>

Damian recalled the reason for his stay at Furlo Pass, and the context of his request for the margrave to control his soldiers, in a letter he wrote over 20 years later (number 142, 1066), to the hermits at Gamugno.<sup>309</sup> He was at the monastery to help establish a new, stricter rule for the monks, probably similar to the one he laid out for Fonte Avellana in Letter 18.<sup>310</sup> After the monks abandoned a special office for the Virgin Mary (at least, this is the causality that Damian establishes), war fell upon the area. With due allowances made for the literary requirements of the letter itself (a warning for the hermits of Gamugno to get themselves in line) it is still a stark reminder of the dangers a region, and institutions like St. Vincent faced when war broke out:

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<sup>308</sup>Blum 1, pp. 85 – 86; “De monasteriis autem, quae nunc tibi vicina sunt, ex Dei parte deprecor et humiliter peto, ut manum illis tuae defensionis adhibeas et ad exercitus multitudinem, qui tecum sunt, non depraedari vel molestari permittas. De monasterio autem sancti Vincentii excellentiam vestrum prae omnibus et super omnia rogo, ut illud specialiter diligas. Praedia, quae ab invasoribus detinentur, legali sibi iure restituas et cunctis mortalibus protectionis tuae scuto defendas.” Reindel 1, pp. 104 – 105.

<sup>309</sup> On Gamugno, see Chapter 3, pp. 142 – 148.

<sup>310</sup> He mentions, for example, imposing heavier burdens of fasting, particularly during Lent.

On all sides there were raids and devastation; rural holdings with buildings and cottages went up in flames; dependents and serfs of that holy place were brutally killed.<sup>311</sup>

According to Letter 142, the monks then asked Damian to act as a mediator and secure peace for the monastery, to which, he replied by rather cryptically quoting from Luke 2:14 “Glory to God in the highest: and on Earth peace”<sup>312</sup>. From Letter 2 it would appear that he did in fact intervene on the monastery’s behalf, even at this early stage of his eremitic career. Blum (following Lucchesi) dates his presence in Furlo to 1042 because of a reference in the *Vita Beati Romualdi* (which Damian appears to have written whilst staying at St. Vincent) to it being nearly 15 years since Romuald’s death (1027).<sup>313</sup> It was not until 1043, however, that Damian became prior of Fonte Avellana. This was something emphasised by John of Lodi in his *Vita Beati Petri Damiani* (although this source must be treated with caution), as chapter six describes how “The reputation of his sanctity spread far: he is forced to watch over the safety of others” – this being the superscript of the chapter that precedes the description of his rise to prior – and some of those others were the monks of St. Vincent.<sup>314</sup> The text records that he was also invited to Pomposa<sup>315</sup> in this period by its abbot, and if he was reorganising established monasteries like these (St. Vincent dates back to around the sixth century) before even rising to prominence in his own house, he must have already had quite a

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<sup>311</sup> Blum 6, p. 141; “Fiunt undique depraedationes atque rapinae. Conflagrantur cum tegetibus ac domibus arae. Familiäres ac servi sancti loci crudeliter trucidantur” Reindel 3, pp. 519 – 520; Blum and Resnick suggest that this refers to the 1055, when the Emperor returned to Italy after war erupted during Godfrey’s rebellion. But given that Damian states in this letter that Imperial aid was not forthcoming in this instance, it seems more likely to refer to the situation that produced Letter 2.

<sup>312</sup> Damian omits ‘to men of good will’, even though it would seem to have reinforced his point that the fault lay with the monks of St. Vincent for abandoning their dedication to Mary.

<sup>313</sup> See Blum 1, p. 6, 84.

<sup>314</sup> “Fama illius sanctitatis longe diffusa, cogitur aliorum saluti invigilare” John of Lodi *PL* 144, 123C – 124C.

<sup>315</sup> Located to the North of Ravenna.

reputation in the region, likely to have been influenced by his recent life there as a scholar of the liberal arts. In the early 1040s it appears that Damian's regional reputation around Ravenna (which doubtless included the 'social capital' of Damian's education,<sup>316</sup> as well as his eloquent eremitism) was important both to himself and to those to whom he became linked by his new vocation.

Aside from his request on behalf of Acereta, Damian declined to make such specific petitions to Godfrey and Beatrice. In Letter 51, to Beatrice (the same letter that praised her decision to live in a chaste marriage), Damian makes a more generalised appeal for the material support of religious institutions. This time the emphasis is on ecclesiastical properties – and it is less about Damian's local contacts than about the place of religious property in the rule of the countess herself. Damian interweaves her virtue and her liberality, as both relate fundamentally to Beatrice's relationship with her husband Godfrey. Damian goes on to advise her thus:

Wherefore my lady, do not, like many powerful persons in the world, grow wealthy by confiscating the goods of the Church, but strive rather to enrich impoverished churches by grants from your own possessions. Grant land and you will raise up heaven! Temporary possessions should be commuted into claims on eternal inheritance.<sup>317</sup>

He then goes on to relate some more local history, this time concerning Guilla, the mother of Margrave Hugh of Tuscany (on whom, see letter 68). On passing the church

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<sup>316</sup> This was an aspect of liberal arts education of which Damian was well aware – see Chapter 1, p. 75.

<sup>317</sup> Adapted from Blum 2, p. 338; "Noli praeterea, domina mi, noli sicut plerique saeculi potentes aecclesiastici iuris confiscatione ditescere, sed stude potius aecclesias tenues praediorum tuorum collatione ditare. Da terram et tolle caelum. Possessiones transitoriae transferantur in titulos haereditatis aeternae." Reindel 2, p. 135.

of St. Mary ‘the Poor’ in the area of Arezzo, Guilla objected to the association of poverty with the mother of God:

And presently she continued, ‘Does this property belong to me?’ Someone replied that in this area she owned a rural estate, comprising according to ancient custom, nine manorial holdings [*mansiones*], but that later, according to modern usage, it was divided into more units. ‘This estate,’ she said, ‘shall belong in perpetuity to this church, and from now on let no one dare to call her poor.’<sup>318</sup>

The verisimilitude of this exemplary passage recalls the very ‘practical’ ethos of Damian’s *Vita Beati Romualdi* (and, as an aside, what he described here is, in its description of small and divided land holdings, held in complex relation to a lordly *ius*, similar to the picture of rural Tuscan property put forward by Wickham).<sup>319</sup> It is equally important that Damian presented an aristocratic mother disposing of her own property, and advised Beatrice to do the same, drawing together Beatrice’s dual role as wife and mother. As discussed above, Damian provided a conceptual link to his letter to Beatrice in his letters to Godfrey by deploying readily comparable examples, and the liberality of Margrave Hugh himself provides the necessary exemplar, for he had founded six monasteries “on estates of his *ius*”<sup>320</sup>, the most noted amongst them being the (urban) Florentine Badia, and furnished them with ample lands and gold and silver vessels.

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<sup>318</sup> Blum 2, p. 339; “Ac protinus intulit: “Estne mei iuris hic ulla possessio?” Cui responsum est, quoniam haberet ibi villam, novem quidem mansionibus ex antiquo more distinctam, quae postmodum iuxta modernam consuetudinem in plurimas est divisa. “Hanc,” ait, “perpetuo iure aecclesia ista possideat, eamque de caetero nemo pauperem appellare praesumat.”” Reindel 2, p. 136.

<sup>319</sup> Wickham, ‘Land Sales and Land Market’.

<sup>320</sup> “in sui iuris possessione” Reindel 2, p. 296.

We saw above how monastic and ecclesiastical property was no less important in Damian's letter to Adelaide of Turin, even though the focus of the letter was a proposition to combat nicolaitism. On the surface this had very little to do with property, save the danger posed to ecclesiastical property by the alienation inherent in priestly family strategies (Damian seems to have been aware of the importance of such matters – see his writings on the communal life for canons). But, as with his other letters to magnates, his concern focuses on monastic property:

There was only the bishop of Aosta who protested, not that he had incurred any loss on your account but rather that his diocese had benefitted from your generosity. In our day, a wealthy person is indeed fortunate if his subjects, living in close by villages, can accuse him of only such a crime. Certainly, in the monastery of Fruttuaria, where I was a guest for almost ten days, I could see good evidence of your humane and agreeable treatment of the churches.<sup>321</sup>

Fruttuaria was also favoured by the Empress Agnes,<sup>322</sup> soon to be related to Adelaide through the marriage of the duchess's daughter Bertha to Henry IV. At the letter's close Damian once again recommends Fruttuaria to the care of the duchess. Just as with St. Vincent, this recommendation came after Damian's residence there, this time for only ten days. Damian's itinerancy was clearly very important for the ways in which he connected with institutions around northern and central Italy (a fact mirrored by the

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<sup>321</sup> Blum 5, p. 300; "preter Augustensem duntaxat episcopum, qui tamen non a te sibi de suis aliquid imminutum, sed conquestus est potius aecclesiae suae nil ex tua liberalitate collatum. Felix, inquam, dives hoc tempore, cui suppare convicanei hoc solum valent crimen inferre. In Fructuariensi certe monasterio, ubi per decem fere dies hospicium tenui, quam humanus quamque suavis tuus principatus esset aecclesiis, evidenter agnovi." Reindel 3, pp. 301 – 302.

<sup>322</sup> See Chapter 4, pp. 212.

significance of the people who passed through the monasteries under his *ius*, as will be seen in the next chapter). The apparent desired result of such generous protection of these institutions was security, and the accompanying freedom to worship undisturbed “as if they were featherless chicks kept warm under their mother’s wings”.<sup>323</sup> This idea was, Pierucci has suggested, central to Damian’s approach to his own hermitages’ relationship with property, but there was a huge difference in the relative scale of these institutions – Fonte Avellana a small house of around 20 – 30 souls, Fruttuaria a large monastery, which houses some very impressive eleventh-century mosaics and had close imperial links through the attentions of Agnes.<sup>324</sup> And although this request is similar in some respects to that which he made to Boniface, the situation has none of the urgency of his peace-making on St. Vincent’s behalf. This was a way, I think, of drawing together allegiances around the curia and its allies through the support of institutions whose interests were broadly aligned.<sup>325</sup>

Damian’s letter to Margrave Godfrey was about separate spheres for the exercise of power – for both just vengeance and pious forgiveness were really kinds of power. The letter may in fact be one of his most revealing, as it exposes the *centrality* of the lay hierarchy to his vision of eremitic monasticism. This reality is manifest in Damian’s attitude to institutional property: on the one hand it allowed the basic demands of his

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<sup>323</sup> Blum 5, p. 300; “ac si sub maternis alis pulli confoveantur implumes” Reindel 3, p. 302.

<sup>324</sup> Agnes had already written to Fruttuaria to ask for their prayers (see T. Struve, ‘Zwei Briefe der Kaiserin Agnes’ *Historisches Jahrbuch* No. 104 (1984), pp. 411-24, p.424), and the monastery enjoyed Imperial protection without fear of interference. I.S. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany: 1056 – 1106* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 126.

<sup>325</sup> Although Andenna argues that whilst Adelaide gave much to Fruttuaria, she refused to give over all privileges to the monastery, avoiding total submission to the more *estremisti* elements of what he calls the ‘Roman Reform’. Andenna ‘Adelaide’ p. 94. This may be a grander version of what was happening ‘on the ground’. Wickham suggests that monasteries were important as lesser land owners gave to them to become part of local clientele relationships and afford themselves some protection. What kind of protection did they receive though? Perhaps Damian’s constant haranguing of local lords about monastic property was part of this struggle between increasingly assertive lay lords and webs of ecclesiastical and monastic patronage.

hermits to be met, and constant, uninterrupted prayer to be funded, yet on the other hand it left Damian to cope with the tensions that arose from accepting property into the heart of eremitism. By embracing property, Damian embraced the system that defined and protected property, quite openly, through violence: violence that Damian more or less explicitly endorsed. This is the social reality that his rich 'inner life' conceals. On the other hand, the fact that Damian did not seek in these letters to gather lands to his own collection of institutions may have been the result of his own attempt at a conceptual compartmentalisation. Elsewhere in his mini-*Vita* of Bishop Rodulf, he sought to separate his ecclesiastical worldliness and eremitic fervour by emphasising his *cella* as his separate and, moreover, his 'true', dwelling place.<sup>326</sup> If his contact with the highest echelons of north- and central-Italian society outlined above was kept purposely distinct from the support of his hermitages and monasteries, exactly what and whom did his stewardship of these institutions involve? This will be the focus of the next chapter.

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<sup>326</sup> See Introduction, pp. 24 – 32.



### **Chapter Three: Peter Damian, his Hermitages and Material Exchange**

This thesis has been primarily concerned with Damian's interactions with the *saeculum*, and the problems that his worldly activities posed to his ascetic public- and self-image. One of the principal arenas for potentially problematic contact with the world was material exchange, be it in the form of small gifts, land, or more straight forward transactions. Property and income were necessary aspects of institutionalised eremitism, but they could also present problems to hermits committed to distancing themselves from 'the world'. Damian also held a position in the Roman curia at a time when, partly through the efforts of Damian himself, its members were very acutely aware of the dangers of simoniacal transactions. Damian's two roles tend to run together in the source material, creating additional problems as he attempted to negotiate overlapping moralities of exchange. There is a great deal of relevant material in the letters, but also in the charters and manuscripts associated with Fonte Avellana and the other institutions in which Damian had a stake. This material can be used to answer several questions: What kind of relationship did Damian have with the 'network' of religious houses that dotted the spine of Italy? What role did such exchanges play in the maintenance of this community? And how did Damian's approach to exchange and property affect the boundaries between his eremitism, his position in the Church and 'the world'?

#### Peter Damian and his Hermitages:

To understand how Peter Damian interacted with 'the world', it is necessary to understand his role as prior of Fonte Avellana and head of what has been termed the

‘Avellanan congregation.’<sup>327</sup> After his promotion to cardinal-bishop, he ceased to be prior of the hermitage itself, but continued to act as the congregation’s head in a way that is difficult to define precisely. Even the congregation itself, which had seemed well established as a historical entity, has been challenged as the most recent research has emphasised how ambiguous and varied Damian’s relationships with these monasteries and hermitages were; the formal position ‘prior-general’ was yet to come into being, and clarity was a chimera of later charters (papal confirmations of privileges) in the twelfth century.<sup>328</sup> But these links, usually rooted in property and rights of jurisdiction, brought Damian into contact with local landowners and other important figures, and they reveal something of the tension in the relationships between different kinds of religious institution in northern and central Italy, and also the tensions inherent in institutional eremitism itself. Celestino Pierucci saw property as something of a necessary evil for Damian; property provided a certain material security that allowed for proper devotion to God: Damian says as much in Letter 18, which outlined his particular take on Benedictine monasticism.<sup>329</sup> The network of Avellanan houses also provided a steady income to the hermits at Fonte Avellana,<sup>330</sup> but concern about the dissolution of these bonds, and even the failure of Damian’s whole monastic and eremitic project lurks behind the picture presented in the sources.

Fears of failure, and crises of organisation were, as Giles Constable has recently shown, endemic amongst newly founded, often idealistic institutions.<sup>331</sup> Damian often

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<sup>327</sup> Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana*, xii.

<sup>328</sup> N. D’Acunto, ‘La Rete Monastico-Eremitica di Pier Damiani e Quella di Fonte Avellana’ in N. D’Acunto (ed.) *Dinamiche Istituzionali delle Reti Monastiche e Canonicali nell’Italia dei Secoli X-XII* (Verona, 2007), pp. 131 – 156.

<sup>329</sup> “All of these things I sought, my brothers, not without some effort, that I might save you laborious exertion, and that your souls might be freer to rise to greater heights, not burdened by want of necessities and the need of providing for lowly things.” Blum 1, pp. 169 – 170.

<sup>330</sup> Pierucci, ‘San Pier Damiano e i beni temporali’, pp. 195 – 237.

<sup>331</sup> G. Constable ‘Controversy and Compromise’, pp. 145 – 156.

inveighed in his letters against hermits who returned to monasteries, or monks who returned to the world.<sup>332</sup> The sources surrounding the Avellanan houses tend to focus on Damian as a ‘charismatic’ individual, but there were also attempts to provide institutional stability and continuity, particularly in Letter 18 and 50, the quasi-*Rules* Damian composed for the Avellanan hermits. The variety of institutions that were founded, however, and the diversity of the relationship negotiated between Damian, his patrons and the monks and hermits themselves necessarily made for complications. Very different relationships were cultivated by Damian with these institutions, produced by different local contexts and interests. One example can be found in three charters, one dated March 1057, the other two from 1063, relating to the monastery of St. Bartholomew in Camporeggiano, near Gubbio, around 30 miles on the road west of Fonte Avellana. The first charter provides for the establishment of the monastery under Damian’s direction. Brothers Giovanni, Peter and Rudolf, and their mother Rozia, gave to Peter Damian (*eremite priori*) the *castrum* of Montecavallo, the *villa* of Camporeggiano and its church, with all its possessions, for the erection of a monastery for the souls of themselves and their parents or kin: *pro redemptione animarum nostrarum...et parentum nostrorum*. It is possible that the church was converted into the monastery. The foundation was held to be “sub regimine et iure et protectione herimi Fontis Avelani [*sic*]”. Providing Fonte Avellana with 30 fish twice a year was established as a condition of the relationship.<sup>333</sup> In the second charter, Pope Alexander II confirmed the possessions and immunities of the monastery of St. Bartholomew, and reaffirms the institution’s obligations to Fonte Avellana:

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<sup>332</sup> See Letters 10, 38, 70 and 152.

<sup>333</sup> Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana*, no. 11, pp. 27 – 28; cf. N. d’Acunto ‘La Rete’ pp. 138 – 139. Non payment would incur a fine of ten pounds of gold.

[W]e decree that because this monastery was constructed, and its growth guided, by the above-mentioned hermitage of Fonte Avellana after it had expended many labours, the hermitage may have this right in this monastery, that twice a year 30 fish, just as was bound by charter..., should be supplied.<sup>334</sup>

The *pensio* of 30 fish appears to have been both symbolic and, since fish were consumed by the brothers of Fonte Avellana on feast days,<sup>335</sup> a potentially very useful supply for Damian as prior. In the third charter John, abbot of St. Bartholomew, confirmed to the hermits of Fonte Avellana, and to Peter Damian, the terms:

This document which children of Rodulf made to the the hermitage I praise and confirm with my successors.<sup>336</sup>

The ‘children of Rudolf’ were likely to have been the family in the 1057 charter, which suggests the absence of the father in the original document, rather than that these children were the successors of the third brother. Stephania Zucchini has suggested that since this family is otherwise unknown, they were likely of relatively minor aristocratic status, based around the *castrum* of Montecavallo.<sup>337</sup> The foundation charter, however, does mention the family’s *heres*, whom the founders included in promises to uphold the

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<sup>334</sup> “...censemus ut quoniam ipsum monasterium impensis multisque laboribus a iam dicto monasterio heremo Fontis Avellani constructum est atque ad incrementum perductum, hoc ius in monasterio ipsa heremus habeat, quod bis in anno triginta pisces, sicut per cartulam diffinitum est,...prebeatur.” Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana*, p. 45.

<sup>335</sup> See Letters 18 (Reindel 1, pp. 168 – 179) and 50 (Reindel 2, pp. 77 – 131).

<sup>336</sup> “Ipsa cartula que filii Rodulfus [*sic*] fecerunt ad predicti eremo laudo et confirmo cum meisque successoribus.” The *pensio* of fish is also mentioned. Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana*, no. 18, pp. 47 – 48.

<sup>337</sup> S. Zucchini, ‘Dall’Eremo all’Episcopato: I Monaci di Fonte Avellana Vescovi di Gubbio all’Epoca di Pier Damiani’ in N. D’Acunzio (ed.) *Fonte Avellana nel Secolo di Pier Damiani* (Verona, 2008), pp. 89 – 100, esp. pp. 94 – 96.

charter against infringements upon the rights or property of the monastery.<sup>338</sup> As the brothers would have been in their fifties when the donation took place,<sup>339</sup> there were probably descendent branches of the family in the region. No wives are mentioned, and so these brothers may have been a combination of widowers and bachelors. What appears to be happening here is that a widow and a generation of males (there may have been other siblings who were not involved) in this family are handing over the lands, probably of their deceased husband and father, *en bloc* for the construction of the monastery. It was common in south and central Italy (less so in the north, but it was known) for these kinds of ‘communal’ foundation to be used to prevent estates from breaking up, or to pool resources and achieve a certain collective security.<sup>340</sup> But in this particular case, the descendants of the founders seem to have been left with very little stake in the future of the monastery, beyond the social capital of being associated with the donors themselves.<sup>341</sup>

The familial prestige that such foundations could bring is evoked by another letter of Damian’s (number 176), written to a certain Gebizo, former prior of one of Damian’s hermitages. Gebizo’s brother had founded a monastery, of which Gebizo had then become abbot. But Damian recalled a moment back at the hermitage (probably Fonte

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<sup>338</sup> If they or their dependants were involved, they were to pay a fine of 100 pounds of silver and then return to the terms of this charter (“et post pena soluta, haec pagina donationis, offertionis sit firma et stabile permaneat usque imperpetuum”).

<sup>339</sup> In 1064 Damian wrote in Letter 109 that the brothers were ‘somewhat older’ than him, and he was around 57 (based on the suggestion in another letter that he was born five years after the death of Otto III, ie in 1007). In 1057, then, Damian would have been 50.

<sup>340</sup> S. Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 605 – 611. Cf. a general comment to this effect in C. Leyser, ‘Custom, Truth, and Gender’, p. 85.

<sup>341</sup> Such monasteries could be of great importance to a family even in cases, such as Camporeggiano, where rights over the properties and incomes are granted wholesale to the institution. As Susan Wood argued, it could nevertheless provide “the sustenance of a community that family member might join or put their children into, a fabric where they could be buried and prayed for, and a cult centre which might hold them together in spite of property partitions.” Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, p. 407.

Avellana), when Gebizo had introduced the topic of his family's foundations in the chapter house:

[Gebizo said:] "My brother was recently instrumental in dedicating the monastery of St. Lawrence, which had been built by him, and as generous benefactor endowed it with twelve liturgical vestments." What business was it of ours to hear what your brother had given to such a sacred place, or to know what his offering cost him, except that you should appear noble and superior because of your brother, and that he might be regarded as rich and generous in view of his gift?<sup>342</sup>

It should also be noted that, according to Damian, Gebizo left his position of prior because he hated being under Damian's authority.<sup>343</sup> This confirms at the central importance of Damian's person to Fonte Avellana, even once the rank of prior passed to other men.

Returning to Camporeggiano, the younger Rodulf, was in fact the same figure that we came across in the introductory chapter to this thesis, who in 1059 became the bishop of Gubbio, and about whom Damian wrote a short *Vita* in Letter 109 (1064). Damian's version of events supplies some context for what we find in the charters:

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<sup>342</sup> Blum 7, p. 281 "Frater enim meus sancti Laurentii monasterium a se constructum nuper ut dedicaretur, effecit et duodecim sibi pallia munificus optulit. Quid enim ad nos in tam terribili loco vel quid tuus optulerit frater audire, vel ipsum oblationis calculum supputare, nisi tantum ut tu generosus atque sublimis in fratre, et frater tuus videretur opulentus ac liberaus in munere?" Reindel 4, p. 281.

<sup>343</sup> "Indeed, you loathe the idea and shudder at the thought that the subjects of Gebizo should be called the disciples of Peter" Blum 7, p. 280; "Horres enim atque fastidis, ut, qui sunt Gebizonis, Petri dicantur esse discipuli" Reindel 4, p. 279. This may well be a play on Peter's name, doubling for both Damian and St. Peter.

Now, about seven years ago, he and his mother and his two brothers, who were somewhat older than he, after first freeing their serfs, turned over to me their castle, impreguably fortified, with all the lands that belong to him, and entering the hermitage [*heremum*], he made his religious profession.

I then built a monastery [St. Bartholomew in Capporeggiano] on their lands [*in eorum possessione*], and for this holy house that now normally supports itself, I greatly rejoice in the Lord. Living there with their mother and other brother, who is in poor health, Rodulf, who was later consecrated a bishop, and his old brother Peter, led such a severe and disciplined eremitical life [*heremiticam vitam*] that their reputation became something marvelous to those who heard of it, and their conduct made them outstanding.<sup>344</sup>

Although powers of appointment and organisation fell, according to the original charter, to Damian as prior of Fonte Avellana,<sup>345</sup> this letter suggests that the family continued to have a considerable, if ill-defined, connection to both the monastery and the land. The properties listed were to “come into the *ius* and [be] of the property of the same monastery”,<sup>346</sup> i.e. St. Bartholomew, but Damian still refers to Camporeggiano as ‘their land’. All the donors appear to have gone to live in Camporeggiano, and there is a possibility that the Abbot John of the third charter is the same brother whom Damian

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<sup>344</sup> Blum 5, p. 298; “Nam ante fere septennium ille cum matre et duobus fratribus se paulisper aetate praecedentibus, servis dumtaxat libertate donatis, castrum suum michi inexpugnabili munitione valla tum cum omnibus, quae sui iuris erant, praediis contulit, atque ad heremum veniens habitum monasticae professionis accaepit. / Monasterium plane in eorum possessione construximus, de cuius nunc sancto conventu regulariter victitante satis in Domino gratulamur, ubi matre et fratre, qui infirmior est, constitutis, iste Rodulfus, qui postmodum ad episcopatus culmen evectus est, et Petrus primogenitus frater heremiticam vitam tam continenter, tam districte duxerunt, ut et audientibus praedicaret eos fama mirabiles et conviventibus vita monstraret insignes.” Reindel 3, pp. 203 – 204.

<sup>345</sup> D’Acunto notes the particular emphasis on such institutional matters in the charters, ‘La Rete’ p. 139

<sup>346</sup> “deveniant ad ius et proprietatis eiusdem monasterii” Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana* p. 27.

described as being infirm in Letter 109.<sup>347</sup> If Abbot John was indeed one of the founding brothers, then in essence this transaction, at least for his lifetime, may have simply shifted the centre of the family estate from the *castrum* of Montecavallo to the new monastery. This in itself may have been worthwhile if the family really were planning to focus anew on Gubbio: Montecavallo is tucked into the Eastern side of the Apennines around 50 miles south of Gubbio, whilst Camporeggiano is only 10 miles across easy relatively terrain to the west.

Damian's account in Letter 109 also raises another question regarding Camporeggiano. The foundation charter makes it clear that the monastery is to follow the *Regula Sancti Benedicti*. This is generally supported by the presence of an abbot, and by a letter that Damian wrote to his namesake nephew, who left his hermitage home and entered St. Bartholomew at Camporeggiano in 1069 in order to learn the modes of ecclesiastical song [*moduli aecclesiasticae cantilena*].<sup>348</sup> Damian, despite the fact that the monastery was under the *ius* of Fonte Avellana, was far from pleased, as he wrote:

Therefore return to the hermitage, dearest son, with all speed, lest monastic  
latitude seduce your youthfulness, and, God forbid, through the oblivion of  
disuse the harshness of the hermitage become hateful.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> As Zucchini notes, this is really an unresolvable hypothesis. Zucchini, 'Dall'Eremo all'Episcopato' p. 94. And with so little information it is impossible to know if John the brother's infirmity was enough to make his abbacy unlikely.

<sup>348</sup> It is not clear which hermitage this was. This particular letter (158) ends with an allegorical reading of Christ's cross, which might suggest Fonte Avellana, which was dedicated to the Holy Cross. On the other hand, Damian also wrote in the letter that he had heard tales of Damianus's ascetic feats (burying himself naked in snowdrifts) secondhand through another hermit, Ubaldus, which suggests it was somewhere other than where Damian was. Damian's description of it being amid snow-covered mountains doesn't really narrow it down.

<sup>349</sup> Adapted from Blum7, p. 91; "Ad heremum ergo, karissime fili, sub omni celeritate revertere, ne dum monasterialis adolescenciam tuam latitudo delectat, heremi districcio per oblivionem desuetudinis quandoque, quod absit, et in odium veniat." Reindel 4, p. 87.



This letter supports the idea that Damian considered his hermitages to have been institutions of a far higher calibre than contemporary coenobitic monasteries, even if persons and material seem to have moved between them (particularly those that fell under Damian's *ius*) with relative frequency.<sup>350</sup> By attempting to hold both kinds of the religious life under his authority and by allowing brothers to pass from the monastery to the hermitage, he seems to have been constructing the institutional framework for his theory of eremitic-cenobitic relations to work in reality. But if Damian was seeking to maintain a sense of inter-institutional community, defined against the world at large, the nature of the relationships between these institutions, even those under his charge, were complicated by this its heterogeneity. This will become more apparent in the case of Gamugno and Acereta below. That Rodulph and Peter were apparently able to live a life of exceptional asceticism in the community at Camporeggio also recalls how malleable approaches to the religious life could be for individuals, like the hermit Teuzo, within otherwise well-defined settings, particularly as Rodulph and Peter already held an exception relationship with the monastery.

That Damian's nephew chose to move to Camporeggiano for musical training, rather than a more established monastery,<sup>351</sup> suggests that the link between the institutions under Damian's *ius* amounted to more than an abstract legal relationship. And whilst formalised payments of *pensio* are the most commonly attested form of material exchange between these houses and Fonte Avellana, in the exceedingly short but revealing Letter 134 (c. 1065 – 1071), Damian hints at the importance of the flow of material items to the maintenance of the network of communities under his direction:

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<sup>350</sup> See Phipps, 'Romuald – Model Hermit', pp. 65 – 77 and Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism*.

<sup>351</sup> Pomposa at this time, for example, enjoyed quite a reputation for musical expertise.

You know, my dear brothers, that those places that have been committed to me, are as one while I am alive, and that whatever things are needed pass indiscriminately to you from here [Fonte Avellana], and are also brought by you to this places as fraternal harmony demands. And I beg the Holy Spirit that after I am dead, the same harmony flourish among you that now by the bond of charity unites you in one heart and one soul.

But now I am constrained to counsel you with cautious provision, lest perhaps after your charity has grown cool, self-love provide a stumbling block among you over keeping any one thing in your possession. Wherefore, I adjure you and call you to witness before the bench of the terrible judge, that after my death, whatever belongs to another hermitage and you perhaps discover to be in your possession, you must restore immediately and without any intrigue or crafty argument, purely and simply return whatever is not yours. Now, I say that whatever I did not confer on another in perpetuity should not be considered a gift but as the property of one house that I, because both were ours, allowed to remain in another.<sup>352</sup>

Pierucci and Polverari considered this letter to be worthy of inclusion in their collection of *Carte di Fonte Avellana*, but the document and its provenance can't guarantee that

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<sup>352</sup> Adapted from Blum 6, p. 76; "Nostis, dilectissimi, quia loca ista nobis commissa me vivente quasi unum sunt, et res quaecunque sunt necessariae hinc ad vos indifferenter transeunt, a vobis etiam huc, prout fraterna exigit unanimitas, perferuntur. Et oro Spiritum sanctum, ut eadem me defuncto inter vos concordia vigeat, quae nunc in vobis cor unum et animam unam per caritatis glutinum conflatur. /Sed necesse est nunc me vobis cauta provisione consulere, ne frigescere forsitan caritate, privatus amor de retentione rei cuiuspiam inter vos scandalum valeat generare. Quapropter adiuramus vos et per tribunal tremendi iudicis optestamur, quicquid post meum obitum quod alterius loci sit, quisque vestrum apud se forte reppererit, praesto restituat, et remota omni machinatione vel callida argumentatione, pure et simpliciter quod alienum est reddat. Alienum autem dico quicquid ego non pro munere habendum perpetualiter contuli, sed rem alterius loci in alio, quia noster erat uterque, manere permisi." Reindel 3, p. 456.

these instructions were carried out.<sup>353</sup> One of the collections that the letter appears in, Vat., Urb. Lat., 503, was compiled at Fonte Avellana in the late eleventh century. If copied at the order of the then prior, it may indicate the enforcement of Damian's wishes after his death. But whether acted upon or not, the letter indicates that resources (albeit of indeterminate scale and character) passed not only upwards through the institutional hierarchy, but downwards and sideways also. Some houses were close enough for the terminally infirm to be transported from one to another – as is evidenced in Letter 128, in which Damian allows for hermits too ill to refrain from meat to be taken from the hermitage to one of the nearby dependent houses to live out their days – these houses were no doubt also close enough to be mutually supporting in important material ways. Nevertheless, the vocabulary that Damian uses is extremely vague in certain key areas, and he does not define the sense in which the houses were 'his'.

How Damian might have seen such exchanges as insulating ascetic institutions from 'the world' can be seen in Letter 37 (c.1050 – 1057). Writing to an abbot 'A' of another monastery he offers the institution material assistance:

Now however, my dearest friend, if you have got the horse [you want], thanks be to God. Otherwise, if you still have not got it, send a monk to us with a letter from you, so that he may carefully inspect all our horses and mules and take whichever he likes. Treat the robe [*pallium*], the best we have, which the same messenger will be bringing you, in place of a pledge, to provide another horse too.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> See Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana* vol. 1, No. 33, p. 87.

<sup>354</sup> Adapted from Blum 2, p. 72; "Nunc autem, dilectissime, si equum habes inventum, Deo gratias. Alioquin si adhuc deest, mitte ad nos cum tuis litteris monachum, qui omnes nostros et equos et mulos

Some have suggested that this could be Abbot Albizo of Pomposa, a monastery that, as we have seen, Damian was in contact with, although Lucchesi has pointed out that Pomposa, which was under the protection of the Archbishops of Ravenna, could hardly be considered a poor institution.<sup>355</sup> Archbishop Henry of Ravenna fell out spectacularly with Abbot Mainard of Pomposa in the 1070s (to the point of imprisoning him), but there is nothing to suggest that this enmity was shown to earlier abbots of the monastery.<sup>356</sup> It could be one of the houses under Damian's direction; Damian certainly doesn't display the common humility *topoi* in offering these gifts. Damian is explicitly concerned that necessity would drive the abbot into dangerous contracts:

For it is not proper that we who serve God in spirit should soil our souls by accepting gifts [*dona*] from evil men [*pravi homines*] because we are in need of temporal things.<sup>357</sup>

Necessity should not cloud the fact that in offering a horse, and an expensive garment, Damian was dealing in items rich with the symbolism of social status. Janet Nelson has shown how the gift of a horse could send very strong signals of status, and of relations between two people, and not only for the militaristic aristocracy, but for the high clergy too.<sup>358</sup> Horses (or mules) given from a hermit to an abbot doubtless referred to a very different repertoire of social images (what kind of horse was a good horse for a hermit?

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sollerter aspiciat et qualem sibi placuerit, tollat. Pallium etiam optimum habemus, quod per eundem nuntium vobis allatum loco pignoris ponite et equum vobis alterum providere." Reindel 1, p. 347.

<sup>355</sup> Blum 2, p. 71, n. 2.

<sup>356</sup> Indeed, the conflict arose primarily from Mainard's position as Cardinal-Bishop of Silvacandida. See C. Frison, 'Enrico' in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* Vol. 42 (1993), pp. 706 – 709.

<sup>357</sup> Blum 2, p. 72; "Neque enim decet, ut qui spiritu Deo servimus, propter rei temporalis inopiam donis pravorum hominum nostras animas inquinemus." Reindel 1, p. 347.

<sup>358</sup> J. Nelson, 'The Settings of the Gift in the Reign of Charlemagne' in W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds.), *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 116 – 148, at pp. 138 – 139.

And for an abbot? And for an eremitic cardinal-bishop?). Damian, in his display of charity, insisted that the recipient came to Fonte Avellana. Again, customary humility appears to be lacking, and Damian emphasises not only the importance of his charity, but the recognition of that charity:

I beg you not to let this short letter be destroyed, but copy it in one of your books, so that my affection for you may be remembered.<sup>359</sup>

This act of giving is, then, not quite *gratis*, particularly if the remembrance took the form of prayers. But what comes out of this letter is how Damian attempts to delineate the community of the religious from other communities through the regulation of gift transactions.

Damian's use of the term *pravi homines* should be noted; it is a term that appeared in reference to dangerous donors in Letter 14 (c. 1045), where the term meant powerful lay aristocrats, and it may well be being used in a similar way here, since horses are involved. The danger inherent in gifts is implicitly offset against other, seemingly more acceptable, forms of material exchange. Damian sends the abbot a *pallium* specifically so that a horse can be substituted for it later. *Pallia* and horses were suitable for honourable gift-exchange between persons of rank.

Quite different were the market transactions mentioned by Damian in Letter 50:

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<sup>359</sup> Blum 2, p. 72; "Queso autem ut breviculus iste non pereat, sed in libro quolibet transcribatur, ut devotionis meae circa vos memoria conservetur." Reindel 1, p. 347.

Often a brother is commanded to travel some distance, guiding the pack animals, and frequently he is sent to market to buy or sell.<sup>360</sup>

As well as twenty or so hermits living at Fonte Avellana there were also around fifteen *conversi* and *famuli*, that is, ‘lay brothers’ and servants.<sup>361</sup> We might have expected these members of the community to handle such worldly duties, and they do appear to have been sent on long errands from the hermitage.<sup>362</sup> But Letter 50 shows that this role could ‘often’ be assigned to a *frater*. Everyday forms of material trading in low-value items – ones that did not carry the baggage of *dona* or *munera* – were open to the members of monastic and eremitic communities, and do not appear to have formed such an important part of the enactment of the lay/monastic divide. There are other prohibitions of relevance to how these transactions were ‘made safe’, as with the rules that limit eating outside of the monastery, which would presumably have come into effect on trips to market.<sup>363</sup>

These day-to-day transactions between the *fratres* of Fonte Avellana and low-status lay people, and the moral risk that they entailed were easily managed by the common monastic practices regarding travel and interaction outside of the monastery. The other forms of exchange discussed above involved more complex considerations, particularly when gifts were made by lay people to monastic and ecclesiastical men of high status. Then the ‘honour’ of a gift, that is, whether it could be considered a true gift or not, was dependant on relative status of the giver, their character and intention – hence the fear of

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<sup>360</sup> Blum 2, p. 313; “Sepe post sagmarios frater procul ire praecipitur, sepe distrahendi vel coemendi gratia ad nundinas destinatur.” Reindel 2, p. 110.

<sup>361</sup> Letter 18, written as a quasi-*Rule* mentions these semi-members of the community who appear to have had a strict fasting regime like the hermits themselves. See Blum 1, pp. 161 – 163.

<sup>362</sup> Again, see Letter 18, Blum 2, p. 163.

<sup>363</sup> See Blum 2, p. 303.

donations from *pravi homines*. Gifts between monastic and eremitic figures, like Damian and the abbot 'A.', or more the more general exchanges between institutions hinted at in Letter 134 (the institutional context is key), did not attract the same fears of pollution, though symbolic statements of status nevertheless remained important. And here too the kind of gift being presented was crucial, constrained by shared ascetic norms.

There is one more element of Camporeggiano's early years to be considered in terms of Damian's relationship with the local political landscape. It was a mere three years after the foundation of the monastery that Rodulf became bishop of Gubbio, and it is difficult to say with any certainty how important his relationship with Damian was in his promotion. Damian's *Vita* of Rodulf skirts around the circumstances of the election, although it is clear that the two continued to be closely associated after the promotion, and Rodulf even seems to have lived in Fonte Avellana for periods during his episcopate.<sup>364</sup> In a later letter (167) Damian also reveals that he had been asked to administer the diocese for a while, although he does not say when.<sup>365</sup> It may just be coincidence that in 1058 (that is, not long before Rodulf's promotion) Damian wrote to Pope Nicholas II complaining of the responsibility of attending to two unnamed bishoprics.<sup>366</sup> In any case, in Rodulf we can observe a man who, like Damian, seems to have moved with ease between different roles and spheres of activity as a landowner, a monk or hermit and as a bishop. The porous boundaries between these roles were key to his impact on his social surroundings. It is also notable that Damian's regional influence stemmed as much from his reputation and position at Fonte Avellana as it did

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<sup>364</sup> See Letter 109, Blum 5, pp. 208 – 210; Reindel 3, pp. 203 – 205.

<sup>365</sup> See Letter 167, Blum 7, pp. 233 – 234; Reindel 4, pp. 234 – 237.

<sup>366</sup> See Letter 57, Blum 2, p. 370; Reindel 2, p. 164; cf. Zucchini, 'Dall'Eremo all'Episcopato' pp. 95 – 96.

from his episcopal rank, which was bestowed some months after the foundation charter of Camporeggiano was signed, and which goes largely unmentioned in the sources surrounding Damian and the monastery. It is fortunate that we have a combination of charters and letters with which to unpick Damian's relationship with Camporeggiano and its founders. Models of exchange tend to look neat from a distance, but it was in the everyday political and economic realities of the region around Fonte Avellana that Damian was drawn into the complexities of 'the world'.

A final point on Gubbio: Rodulf's successor as prelate granted lands to Camoreggiano,<sup>367</sup> and after Damian's death, John of Lodi also went to become bishop of Gubbio. It is important to remember that, despite the consistency of Damian's anti-urban rhetoric, such links could develop between a hermitage and a city. Even Romuald's great hermitage of Camalodi profited directly from the activity of urban merchants, taking tithes from all business conducted by the merchants and traders of the city of Arezzo.<sup>368</sup>

#### St. Barnabas at Gamugno and St. John at Acereta:

The example of Camporeggiano was very much one of local impacts in the immediate area around Fonte Avellana and Gubbio. Our next example, encompassing the houses of St. Barnabas at Gamugno (now Gamogna) and St. John at Acereta takes us a little further afield. A collection of documents from the 1060s, both charters and letters, reveal much about the relationship between Peter Damian and these houses, and these help us understand some of the problems Damian faced as head of a network of

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<sup>367</sup> Zucchini 'Dall'Eremo all'Episcopato' p. 95 – 96.

<sup>368</sup> D. Webb, 'A Saint and his Money: Perceptions of Urban Wealth in the Lives of Italian Saints' in W. Sheils and D. Wood (eds.), *The Church and Wealth*, SCH 24 (1987), pp. 61 – 73, at p. 61.



religious houses. What they present us with, however, is a complex and murky picture, where the relationships of religious houses with one another, and with the laity, are seldom well defined. John of Lodi recounted the founding of Gamugno, and nearby Acereta (see map) in his *Vita*:

In this place therefore, with the other brothers set up, moving again to another area, he found a suitable place in the county of Faenza, which is called Gamugno: where, dwelling places having been prepared, he set up others to serve God. And in the vicinity to this place, that is called Acereta, he constructed a monastery.<sup>369</sup>

This makes it all sound rather simple. But beyond their foundation, what were the practical implications for these houses of being associated with Peter Damian? Gamugno is around 60 miles up the Appennines from Fonte Avellana as the crow flies, though much further by road across the mountainous terrain. Nevertheless, the hermits there appear to have been at times under his personal direction, and fell more generally under his protection and jurisdiction. It was not always an easy relationship. In the two previous chapters we saw that Damian was given advisory roles in a number of monasteries in the hinterlands of Ravenna. But there was no suggestion of permanency in these positions. In the case of Pomposa, in Letter 6 (c. 1044), Damian cultivated his relationship with the monastery, but certainly not in a manner that recalls lordship or

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<sup>369</sup> “Quo igitur in loco, aliis locatis fratribus, ad alium rursus demigrans in comitatu Faventino congruum reperit locum, qui nuncupatur Gamonium: ubi praeparatis habitaculis alios Deo famulatuos constituit. Sed et in vicinum huic loco monasterium, quod Acereta dicitur, construxit.” John of Lodi *Vita* PL146, 125A.

claims to jurisdiction. His approach follows norms of self-deprecation that had a long history in exchanges between religious men in medieval Europe.<sup>370</sup>

I also beg of you, my lords, that you kindly accept a small blessing [*parvula benedictio*] from the hand of your servant, and take note not of what, but by whom it is offered, not how valuable it might be, but of the extent of affection whereby it is bestowed.<sup>371</sup>

Blum suggests that the *parvula benedictio* was probably the letter itself,<sup>372</sup> although it may have also been accompanied some other offering. In this case Damian may actually be talking about the labour of prayer, which he asks for in return.<sup>373</sup> Equally important here is the emphasis on institutions: Damian places himself and the hermits of Fonte Avellana at the disposal of the brethren of Pomposa:

You too, my dear friends, even though I lived far removed from you, must not regard me as a stranger, nor consider me as just any friend or as some sort of companion, but without doubt recognise me and my entire community as your own legal possession, and whatever should be your wish, without hesitation demand of us as your subjects and servants.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> J-H. Wilson Clay, 'Gift-giving and books in the letters of St Boniface and Lul' *Journal of Medieval History* 35 (2009), pp. 313–325.

<sup>371</sup> Blum 1, p. 96; "Rogo autem, domini mei, parvulam benedictionem de manu servi vestry benigne suscipite, et non quid sed a quo, non quantum sed ex quanto proferatur, attendite." Reindel 1, p. 114.

<sup>372</sup> Blum 1, p. 96 n. 5.

<sup>373</sup> "And so, my dear friends, prostrating myself at your sacred feet, with tears I beseech you to pray always for me your servant, and especially after my death" Blum 1, p. 96.

<sup>374</sup> Blum 1, p. 96; "Vos eciam, dilectissimi, licet corporis habitatione semotum, nolite me extraneum esse decernere, nolite me eciam amicum quemlibet vel qualemcumque socium deputare, sed et nos et totum nostrum conventum quasi proprii vestri iuris possessionem esse indubitanter agnoscite, et quicquid vobis placuerit, tamquam vestris subiectis atque domesticis absque ulla cunctacione iubete." Reindel 1, p. 114.

Given Damian's sojourn in the monastery, this probably represents a little more than a diplomatic expression of respect towards, and a hope of being associated with, a regionally influential house, but not a great deal more. Indeed, the prominence of humility in Damian's dealings with such institutions marks them out from those more permanently under his *ius*. Damian's relationship with a house like Gamugno was quite different.

On one level his association with Gamugno was like those he shared with the broader community of 'like-minded' monastic institutions around northern Italy. There were a number of occasions when Damian was present at Gamugno to lend personal direction to the hermitage, although references to visits are vague and sometimes contradictory. The details, dates and duration, of these stays are seldom clear. In Letter 109 to Pope Alexander II (Summer 1064), Damian recounts the tale of a miracle that he heard of whilst staying at Gamugno, from two travelling monks:

With Jesus as witness, I am not lying, because not yet three months have elapsed, from when two young monks came to me whilst I was residing at the hermitage of Gamugno, who said that one of them was from the Duchy of Spoleto, and the other truly from the town of Pola in the region of Venetia.<sup>375</sup>

The visit of these monks is recounted also in Letter 56, although this version does not lend great support to Letter 109. Certain aspects of the story change: there both monks

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<sup>375</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, p. 222; "Iesu teste, non mentior, quia necdum tres menses elapsi sunt, ex quo ad me in Gamugni videlicet heremo diversantem duo adulescentes monachi venerunt, quorum alter de Spoletina monarchia, alter vero de Venetiae partibus, Polensi videlicet urbe, oriundos se esse dixerunt." Reindel 3, p. 218.

are said to have been from Pola, and no mention is made of Gamugno. The dating of the letters is a problem, as there is a good deal of disagreement over the date of Letter 56, not least because there is no corroborating record of the recipient ('Petrus Cerebrosus' – Peter the Hare-Brained).<sup>376</sup> Given the name, Leclercq has suggested that this particular Peter is fictitious,<sup>377</sup> and attempts to date it have ranged from 1043 – 1064. The letter bears certain resemblance to Damian's letters to the Florentine hermit Teuzo and the clerics of Florence Cathedral that he wrote in the mid 1050s, as it covers similar themes of eremitic patience and humility, and the importance of self-flagellation. It may be that Letter 56 was a rhetorical summation of the problems he faced there, which would suggest an earlier date, and cast doubt on whether Damian did in fact hear the story at Gamugno.<sup>378</sup> The retelling of orally-transmitted stories was, as we have seen throughout this thesis, often used by Damian in his letters. Cases such as this one emphasise the rhetorical nature of these instances.

But if there is doubt hanging over this particular instance, there are more certain examples. In letter 142 (dated to 1066, to the brothers at Gamugno) Damian states flatly that he was staying with them at Christmas, when he caught them (much to his displeasure) making mulled wine.<sup>379</sup> It seems that the kind of regime instituted at Fonte Avellana was exported to Gamugno. As to his activities during the visit, another letter, number 141 suggests that he may have been there overseeing building work at the

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<sup>376</sup> 'Cerebrosus' appears in Horace's *Sermones*, book 1: "Iamque dies aderat, nil cum procedere lintrem sentimus, donec cerebrosus prosilit unus ac mulae nautaeque caput lumbosque saligno fuste dolat: quarta vix demum exponimur hora" 1;5;21. The use of the word by Damian may point to this literary origin.

<sup>377</sup> J. Leclercq, *Saint Pierre Damien, ermite et homme d'église* (Rome, 1960) p. 102; cited Blum 2, p. 361, n. 2.

<sup>378</sup> For examples of Damian addressing an imaginary 'other' in his letters see Letter 1 (his tract against Judaism) and Letter 31 (the *Liber Gomorrhianus*); although in these cases it is more obvious as the invented character is not the addressee. But see Letter 15 for an example of a letter whose addressees may have been fictional, and the letter itself a model.

<sup>379</sup> Reindel 3, p. 506, Blum 6, p. 129.

beginning of 1066. Damian does not mention his location by name, but complains of the working conditions, and his absence from Fonte Avellana:

When I am writing something that I especially wish to preserve, surrounded by an extensive library of various volumes, I call to mind the opinions of the masters, and always resort when necessary to their works. But now I find myself high amid the snowy crags of this mountain, and am eager to erect the structure of this monastic building, I am not only unable to pore over the pages of books that are not at hand, but am also disturbed by the resounding noise of stonecutters and masons.<sup>380</sup>

If this is Gamugno and if it isn't, it is probably one of his other houses in any case, then Damian did indeed undertake the kind of direct management that he engaged in at Fonte Avellana, where he expanded both the library and the overall complex considerably.<sup>381</sup> As well as making physical provisions, Letter 137, also written to the brothers at Gamugno) sees Damian dispensing spiritual advice to the brothers at Gamugno, and accepting, or claiming, responsibility for the welfare of their souls. To express the relationship he turned to the language of lordship, with himself as God's estate manager:

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<sup>380</sup> Blum 6, p. 112; "Cum servandum aliquid quod cordi sit scribere soleo, multiplici diversorum codicum bibliotheca vallatus maiorum sententias recolo atque, ubi necessarium est, ad eorum semper exempla recurro. Nunc autem in praecepti montis atque nivalis cacumine constitutus, dum monasterialis aedificii fabricam construere gestio, non modo librorum paginis, quae procul absunt, insistere nequeo, sed et cementariorum ac latomorum perstreptentium clamore depressus, id ipsum pene quod intra me est, ignorare compellor." Reindel 3, p. 488.

<sup>381</sup> If he was at Gamugno we might wonder why he didn't strole down to valley to the library at St. John at Acereta, however.

Managers of rent-bearing estates or stewards of lands, as long as they want to make every effort to please their lords, do not permit the fixed rates to be reduced during the period of their tenure. I too, to whom the guardianship, not just of sundry physical things, but of your souls was committed, would be very much afraid if the return on your crops that should be brought to the Lord's barns were lessened while I was in charge, if through my connivance, God forbid, the full measure of your holy service was not fulfilled.<sup>382</sup>

Whilst Damian was evidently at Gamugno on a number of occasions, and looms large in the sources that relate to the hermitage, it seems that the brothers of St. Barnabas were not usually under the direct authority of Fonte Avellana. Aside, of course, from their own prior, Gamugno fell at least to some degree under the *ius* of the nearby monastery of St. John at Acereta, whilst Acereta was likewise linked to Fonte Avellana. The latter point is substantiated by the fragmentary remains of a charter from the mid 1050s, in which Abbot Iohannes of Acereta pledges to annually pay a *pensio* to Fonte Avellana of five pounds of *denarii*.<sup>383</sup> The manuscript in which this charter has been preserved, Vat. Ottob. Lat. 339, now in the Vatican Library, belonged to Acereta itself. Comprising 195 folios (285 x 162mm), it reveals some interesting aspects of the house's relationship with Damian. The folio containing the charter (195r) is in very poor condition; the *pensio* was to be paid as long as the monastery of St. John followed the eremitic life, but the punishment for not doing so is lost, as that part of the folio has

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<sup>382</sup> Blum 6, p. 90; "Pensualium conductores aedium vel procuratores agrorum, dum dominis suis placere desiderabiliter ambiunt, exactionum canones minui villicatus sui tempore non permittunt. Nos etiam quibus non quarumlibet rerum, sed animarum vestrarum est commissa custodia, valde pertimescimus, si frugum vestrarum redditus qui dominicis inferebatur orreis, sub nostra cura minuitur, si sanctae servitutis vestrae pensum per nostram, quod absit, coniventiam non impletur." Reindel 3, p. 467.

<sup>383</sup> Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana*, No. 13, pp. 31 – 32.

been worn away over time.<sup>384</sup> Honouring the agreement would earn the monks a part in the glory of the resurrection.<sup>385</sup>

As for the rest of Ottob. Lat. 339,<sup>386</sup> the majority of it (folios 6v – 195v) is taken up by a compilation of works by Gregory the Great, in what looks like a tenth- or eleventh-century hand, and which may not have been written at Acereta itself. Judging by the moderate wear and tear on 6r, this was likely a separate manuscript, to which a number of shorter texts have been sewn, both to the front and back of the manuscript. These include a letter by Smaragdus of St. Michel on the subject of the trinity (1r – 2v, which Damian himself referred to in Letters 81 and 91, perhaps citing from this very copy<sup>387</sup>), a work on St. John the Evangelist (3r – 3v), and, more importantly for our purposes, a short poetic *Vita* of Peter Damian, and a prayer for his soul (4r – 5v). There is also a poem condensed from Damian's *Vita* of St. Romuald (6r),<sup>388</sup> and a fragment of Damian's Letter 46 on the verso of folio 194, again with significant damage.<sup>389</sup> At the foot of 6r there is a small amount of musical notation (reproduction below), accompanied only by the word 'Mass' (*missa*). It is not clear what this notation was to be used with, but it may reflect the liturgical use of either, or both, of the poems.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> "...hoc dumtaxat quamdiu locus ille in heremitice vite ordine perseverat." Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana* p. 31.

<sup>385</sup> "Qui autem huius obligationis conservator extiterit...mereatur etiam partem habere in gloria resurrectionis." Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana* p. 32.

<sup>386</sup> On Vat. Ottob. Lat. 339, see also A. Gaudenzi, 'Il Codice Vaticano del Monastero di Acerata' *Studi Medievali* 3 (1908 – 1911), pp. 301 – 312.

<sup>387</sup> See Blum 3, p. 230, n. 111, following J. Ryan, *Sources* no. 272, p. 125.

<sup>388</sup> On this *Vita*, which is written in a very poor hand and in very poor condition, see Gaudenzi, 'Il Codice' pp. 307 – 308.

<sup>389</sup> On 195v, that is, the verso of the charter, there is a tiny fragment of text: "...habent...-ndiam atque...ipse scripsit...-a sed et alia...nobis mittere...ab omnia..." I have as yet been unable to match this to any text of Damian's, or any others.

<sup>390</sup> The one on Damian is so much more legible than the work on Romuld that it seems the more likely candidate.

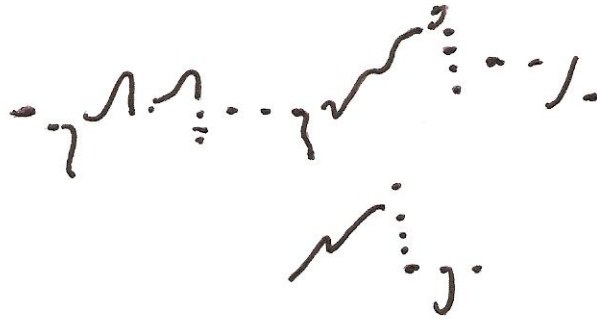


Fig. 6: Neumes in Ottob. Lat. 339, 6r

Tackling the last letter first, Letter 46 was an intriguing inclusion. The only other eleventh-century manuscript that it survives in is Montecassino Cod. 358 (C1). In it, Damian reprimands Pope Victor II (1055 – 1057) for not seeking justice for a certain Henry:

While [Henry] was still performing service in the earthly world [*in terreno seculo*] he was completely and quietly in possession of all his property. But after seeking shelter under the wings of Christ, and after following Petter's example of giving up things to follow in the footsteps of the Redeemer, some cruel thief suddenly evicted him of his property and despoiled him of all that he owned, as if he had fled to the protection of some weak defender.<sup>391</sup>

If by seeking 'refuge under the wings of Christ' Damian meant entering a monastery, then perhaps Henry, about whom nothing is known, was a monk in St. John's who could hope to find some protection in the well-connected head of Fonte Avellana. If he

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<sup>391</sup> Adapted from Blum 2, p. 250; "Quamdiu enim terreno saeculo militavit, sua omnia bona naviter et quiete possedit. Postquam vero sub alas Christi confugium petiit, postquam Petri secutus exemplum dimissis omnibus ad sectanda redemptoris vestigia properavit, protinus eum crudelis praedo suis possessionibus expulit, et quasi sub invalidi defensoris patrocinium fugientem bonis omnibus spoliavit." Reindel 2, pp. 40 – 41.



wasn't, it is difficult to understand the particular significance of this letter for the brothers in Acereta, unless they were touched by a similar case. But this is perhaps comparable with the attempts Damian made to secure a donation for Acereta from Duke Godfrey and Countess Beatrice, at a time of need.<sup>392</sup>

The poetic *Vita* of Damian in Ottob. Lat. Vat. 339 brings to light how the monks at Acereta chose to remember their founder, and his importance to the self-image of the monastery. The text, and the prayer for Damian to the Virgin Mary that follows it, are extremely well presented in a very neat and regular hand. Regular stops are marked in the text; not punctuation but pause marks for recital. As the date of Damian's death, the eighth kalends of March (22<sup>nd</sup> February 1072) is included in the final 'chapter', this may have been used to annually commemorate his death. The chapters themselves, of which there are six and a prologue, are between one and eight lines long. The text is written in hexameters and there is an acrostic reading "Sede sit in celi Damiani gloria Petri" ("Let the glory of Peter Damian be in the seat of heaven"), with the first letter of each line written in red.

Much of the *Vita* is concerned with Damian's retreat from the world, and with his apparently unwilling return to it as cardinal-bishop: a narrative that has endured to this day. Chapters one to three deal with his withdrawal, and "how, once made a hermit of the spirit, he cleansed many from the contagion of their sins."<sup>393</sup> Chapter four covers his promotion by Pope Stephen, in terms that emphasise Damian's reluctance to accept the appointment, but also the social weight that the post bestowed:

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<sup>392</sup> See Chapter 2, p. 100.

<sup>393</sup> "Quod spiritualis heremita factus multos a peccatorum contagione purgaverit."

Unwillingly [he] ascended to the holy rank of the bishopric

Of a famous see, where Ostia has for centuries been illustrious.<sup>394</sup>

If the anonymous author was concerned about the worldly activities that episcopal rank might have lead him into, the fifth chapter entitled “What he did in his episcopate”<sup>395</sup> has a very monastic take on the events that followed:

Glory be to the whole world with the lamp of that teacher!

For he shines forth in words and righteous deeds, everywhere.

His flock distributed all they had and which the pious people bore.

And amid great things he founded habitations for his lambs.

This the monks show forth, and the hermits adorn with their way of life.

Severe fastings caused his body to be utterly broken,

As he stands throughout the night weeping for himself and praying for his brethren.

HE ALSO PRODUCED BOOKS MARVELLOUS FOR THEIR POWERFUL  
FORCE<sup>396</sup>

From these lines alone it would be impossible to tell that Damian had become a cardinal-bishop at all. This monk of Acereta chose to emphasise three particular undertakings: Damian’s founding and organising of religious institutions, his feats of ascetic endurance, and he gave especial prominence to Damian’s literary output in the

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<sup>394</sup> “Nolens as sacrum conscendit pontificatum /Insignis sedis qua splenduit Hostia seclis.”

<sup>395</sup> “Quid in episcopatu egerit”.

<sup>396</sup> “Gloria sit mundo doctoris lampade cuncto /Lucet enim verbis et factis undique rectis /Omnia dispersit sua plebs et quae pia vexit /Rebus et in magnis habitacula condidit agnis /Id monachi monstrant heremitae moribus ornant /Acra dabant prosus fractum ieiunia corpus /Pernoctans plorans sibi stans et fratribus orans /EDIDIT ET LIBROS POLLENTI FLAMINE MIROS”.

last line of the chapter, written all in capitals. Gaudenzi noted that the very existence of the poem pointed to a considerable level of learning amongst at least some of the monks in the monastery<sup>397</sup> – learning seen also in Damian’s Avellanese followers John of Lodi and his nephew Damianus. The poet chose his words carefully, however, and praised not the elegant style or irresistible logic of his writings, but their ‘powerful force’.<sup>398</sup> In this way the poet’s exaltation of Damian’s learned compositions remained compatible with his rhetorical self-image of *simplicitas*. Notable too is the distinction between monks and hermits, and the suggestion that the hermits somehow ‘adorned’ the monastic institutions like Acereta. As we have seen, Acereta and Gamugno were both linked to Damian through their foundation, and to each other by their proximity. But the specifics of the relationship between them were far more complex, and difficult, than this memorial *Vita* attests.

The first evidence of the link between Acereta and Gamugno comes with the partial dissolution of the relationship. It also records the importance of the region’s aristocracy to these foundations. In July 1060, in the presence of Count Guido (the fourth count to have that name in the family now known as the ‘Guidi’) and his wife Countess Ermillina, Damian attempted to pacify the relations between the hermitage of Gamugno and the monastery of Acereta in a charter, by rendering the hermitage independent of Acereta but with the obligation to pay 12 Venetian *denarii* a year as pension. Sick hermits had to be allowed to enter the monastery, and those monks that wished to pass to the hermitage had to be allowed, in concordance with the abbot’s wishes. If there are fewer than 3 hermits, the institution had to pass back into the hands of the monastery:

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<sup>397</sup> Gaudenzi, ‘Il Codice’ pp. 311 – 312

<sup>398</sup> *Flamen* was also a classical term for a pagan priest.

Nevertheless it is by no means to be believed that discord can come between angels, whom the supreme peace of God rules, ‘which surpasses all understanding’. Because truly the peoples, whom these angels had been in charge of were quarrelling against one another, therefore angel may be said to be fighting against angel, who had resisted him. In this manner, both the abbot of the monastery and the prior of the hermitage often mutually disagree with each other, because those subject to them, making use of different rules, do not observe rules for the same way of life. Therefore we must make provision for peace amongst them, because they are entrusted to us, and counteract the growing thorn-bushes of scandal lest, God forbid, they spring up with the passage of the seasons. Wherefore, I Peter a sinner and a monk, in the name of omnipotent God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, from the authority of the highest apostles Peter and Paul, whose servant, however unworthy, I profess myself to be, in the presence of, and with the consent and approval of, the most illustrious Count Guido and his most serene wife Ermelina, decide, order and decree that henceforth and hereafter in perpetuity, the hermitage of Gamugno in a certain balanced arrangement is to be both free and subjected: free, indeed, if it remains in its way of life, that is, if it has a community of monks who keep the eremitic life, and live by rule under a prior; but subject in this respect only that Gamugno pay the monastery at Acereta 12 Venetian *denarii* each year as a *pensio*. Besides this we concede that the abbot of the aforementioned monastery has no *ius*, and no power or authority over the hermitage itself or its properties or inhabitants.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>399</sup>“Verumtamen nullo modo credendum est inter angelos, quos summa Dei pax tenet, ‘que scilicet

The charter also gives Gamugno the income of the church of St. Donatus in Modigliana. Incomes like these could be very important to institutions built in such inhospitable surroundings,<sup>400</sup> and the *pensio* owed to Acereta was perhaps a small price to pay for financial self-sufficiency. This income was added to in a charter dated 6<sup>th</sup> May 1063, in which Damian's name is the focal point in a transaction securing some lands from the Bishop of Faenza for Gamugno, for the annual *pensio* of 3 Venetian *solidi*. Perhaps incomes from lands such as these became more important once the material bond between Acereta and Gamugno had been loosed in 1060:

Lord Peter, by the grace of the Lord ordained bishop of the church of Faenza, was therefore pleased, with the agreement and consent of all the priests of the same bishop, to concede and to grant to Lord Peter Damian, Bishop of the church of Ostia with his eremitic monks, who are in the hermitage of Gamugno, which is named for St. Barnabas the Apostle, in perpetuity, half of the parish of St. Valentine, by name, with half of the land

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exsuperat omnem sensum', intervenire posse discordiam. Quia vero populi, quibus illi angeli preerant, diversis a se invicem discordabant, idcirco angelus dicitur adversus angelum, qui sibi restiterat preliari. Hoc itaque modo et abbas monasterii et prior heremi inter se invicem sepe dissenciant, quoniam et eorum subditi, diversis utentes regulis, non eiusdem conversationis instituta custodiunt. Unde eorum paci, quod nobis commissi sunt, necesse est providere et futuris scandalorum vepribus ne per incrementa temporum, quod absit, oboriantur, occurrere. Quapropter ego Petrus peccator monachus in nomine Dei omnipotentis Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, ex auctoritate summorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli, quorum ego licet indignum famulum me esse profiteor, presentibus et consencientibus atque laudantibus Guidone clarissimo comite et Ermelina eius serenissima uxore, constituo, ordino atque decerno ut ammodo et deinceps in perpetuum heremus Gamugni quodam discrecionis moderamine et libera sit et subiecta. Libera quidem si in suo statu permanserit, hoc est si conventum monachorum habuerit, qui vitam heremiticam teneant et sub priore regulariter vivant. Subiecta vero in hoc tantummodo ut per unumquemque annum monasterium Aserete duodecim denarios Veneticorum pro pensione persolvat. Preter hoc nullum ius nullamque potestatem vel dicionem abbatem predicti monasterii super ipsam heremum eiusque pertinencias vel habitatores eius habere concedimus." Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana* no. 15, p. 37.

<sup>400</sup> Cf. Howe, *Church Reform and Social Change*, pp. 90 – 91.

and its tithes and land, and whatever it can be seen to have from the same bishop in Riutilio in the *contado* of Faenza...<sup>401</sup>

It should be noted that Damian does not appear in the list of witnesses and signatories, and his episcopal rank is far more prominent than in 1060; perhaps because the donor was also an ecclesiastical figure, but it is also suggestive of the value of Damian's promotion to (to put it crudely) the Avellanan brand. This 1063 charter also confirms one of the conditions of the settlement between Gamugno and the monastery of St. John in Acereta, and it is clear that in holding the houses together Damian could also seek to protect the houses' material assets:

For this reason that, if, at the same time, because of the pressures of sins, the hermitage may be destroyed, then the aforementioned half of the parish of St. Valentine with half the land and half of its tithes, as it is seen to pertain to it, may go with this charter to the monastery of St. John (in Acereta) with the authority of the *ius* of the bishop,...<sup>402</sup>

But whilst the 1060 charter purports to be solving the dispute between the two houses, the resulting agreement left Gamugno with ties (of largely uncertain character) to Damian, the Guidi family and, still, Acereta.

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<sup>401</sup> "Placuit idcirco dopnus Petrus, Domini gratia sancte Faventine ecclesie episcopus, per consensum et voluntatem omnium presbiterorum eiusdem episcopi, concedere atque largiri dompno Petro Damiano Osstiensis ecclesie episcopo eiusque monacis heremitariis, qui in heremo Gamonio, que est vocabulum Santi Barnabe apostoli, in perpetuum, idest medietatem de plebe Sancti Vallentini nominatim cum medietate de terra et decimatione sua et terra et quidquid ab eodem episcopo habere videtur in Riutilio infra comitatum Faventie,..." Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana* no. 19, p. 50.

<sup>402</sup> "Ea sillicet ratione si quocumque tempore peccatis imminentibus ipsum heremum destructum fuerit, tunc superscripta medietas de iamdicta plebe Sancti Vanentini cum medietate de terra et medietate decimatione sua, sicuti ad ipsam medietatem pertinere videtur, cum hac scriptura in monasterium Sancti Iohannis deveniat iuris auctoritate episcopi,..." Pierucci and Polverari *Fonte Avellana* no. 19, p. 50.

As with Camporeggiano, a letter exists that provides greater perspective on the charter evidence. Writing in 1059 (Letter 63) to Cardinal Hildebrand, Damian revealed that he had previously been engaged in a dispute with the count over the land of Acereta and Gamugno.<sup>403</sup> Meeting in Florence, Guido, or rather Guido's "followers with the flock of their servants",<sup>404</sup> apparently told Hildebrand that the monastery had been built on land that the previous count, Tehtgrimus, Guido's uncle, who died childless, had left for use by his *clientelae*.<sup>405</sup> This led Damian to chide Hildebrand for even considering that this might be correct, and to claim that "He who makes his servant his heir deservedly destroys his inheritance."<sup>406</sup> Damian took a severe attitude towards these dependents when property was at stake: in Letter 63, and in answer to their greivences, he quotes at length from Ecclesiasticus 33:25 – 28:

25. Fodder and a wand and a burden are for an ass; bread and correction and work for a slave.

26. He worketh under correction and seeketh to rest; let his hands be idle and he seeketh liberty.

27. The yoke and the thong bend a stiff neck; and continual labours bow a slave.

28. Torture and fetters are for a malicious slave; send him to work, that he be not idle.

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<sup>403</sup> Reindel 2, pp. 221 – 225; Blum 3, pp. 16 – 20. As Damian does not name the institution involved, it is hard to be precise, but the Guidi's involvement in the aforementioned charter surely indicates that it was one or both of them.

<sup>404</sup> "asseculae cum grege servili" Reindel 2, p. 222.

<sup>405</sup> This Blum translates as 'serfs'. Although Damian likens them to slaves in the letter, this seems more to do with rhetoric than legal definition. *Clientelae* and later *obsequentes* rather seem to imply someone further up the social scale.

<sup>406</sup> "Merito pedit hereditatem, qui servum relinquit heredem." Reindel 2, p. 223.

Hard graft was fit for the servile, not bountiful property! Damian does not mount a particularly convincing defence in Letter 63. He makes no reference to any documents that might have carried legal weight, and his central argument, aside from asserting that it was inappropriate to make *obsequentes* one's heirs under any circumstances, seems to have been simply that there was enough land to go around anyway.<sup>407</sup> The exact status of the dependants who were involved in the dispute isn't clear, but the nature of their claims indicates a group rather less servile than Damian's biblical rhetoric suggests. As the founding charter has not survived it is impossible to know what safeguards were or were not put in place, but this does demonstrate that problems could be created by the death of an aristocratic donor, particularly in this case where no obvious heir existed. In this particular instance even vassals outside of the immediate family appear to have been able to mount claims for monastic property. Without knowing more about the claimants, it is impossible to know if they had a serious right to the lands, or if the disruption of hereditary hiccup had merely brought all manner of chancers out of the woodwork. The presence of Guido and his wife at the signing of the charter in 1060, seems to indicate an end to the disagreement, although this raises the question of how the tenants' grievances were dealt with, or if they were dealt at all. Perhaps the income from Modigliana was to offset lands given back to the tenants around Gamugno and Acereta? There is too little evidence to know if they ever saw their complaints redressed.

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<sup>407</sup> "Could one say that there was any one of his numerous servants who was still in want, when upon his death the prince had no posterity to succeed him? Was it not permissible for him, while he was still alive, to grant something of his land to God, because his vassals possessed everything? Do you think that those who were assigned the task of turning the spits over the fire, or of washing the kettles, possessed so much of the lord's property, that as he left this world he was unable to bequeath anything of his wealth to the holy churches?" Blum 3, pp. 17 – 18. "An adhuc obsequentis cunei iudicabitur indigus, qui, cum ex hac ipse vita decesserit, posteritas ei nulla succedit? Huic etiam, qui advivit, quia clientes omnia possident, aliquid Deo conferre de sui iuris allodio non licebit? Censebis, ut hii, qui rotandis ad ignem veribus vel ablundis sunt lebetibus deputandi, sic herilia bona possideant, ut eorum domini recedentes e saeculo sanctis aecclésiis sui iuris impendia non relinquunt?" Reindel 2, p. 223.



Unlike the family that helped found Camporeggiano, the Guidi didn't become so intimately intertwined with Gamugno and Acereta. They appear to have retained some powers over the institutions, as they lend their 'consent' to the new agreement, but the charter limits their future responsibility to ensuring fidelity to Damian, who again is defined by his episcopal role:

In addition, we Count Guy and Countess Ermelina my wife pledge, promise and undertake to all the abbots [now and future] of the aforesaid monastery to guard and in all respects to keep and in all ways observe the aforesaid definition made by lord Peter, the venerable bishop, with our consent, as stated, between the monastery and the hermitage.<sup>408</sup>

This relative distance was probably a product of the fact that the family's power and lands were far more extensive than those of Rodulf and his brothers. The Guidi held properties across Romagna and Tuscany, though under the stewardship of the more recent generations of Guidi, Tuscany became their primary concern. This particular Guido appears to have broadly aligned himself with the interests of Godfrey and Beatrice, and it may have been the involvement of Damian with the margraves that we charted in the last chapter, which led him to soften his attitude towards Damian's institutions. In dealing with the Tuscan aristocracy in this way, Damian's roles as hermit and as cardinal-bishop seem to have become increasingly intertwined, and this may reflect the nature of his influence in the region, contrasting somewhat with Gubbio. There he was head of a local hermitage of some renown (albeit with some local

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<sup>408</sup> "Insuper nos quidem Guido comes et Ermelina cometissa mea uxor spondimus, promittimus atque obligamus omnibus abbatibus predicti monasterii quod diffinicio predicta a domno Petro venerabili pontifici, nobis consencientibus, ut dictum est, inter monasterium et heremum facta custodire modisque omnibus observare." Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana* no. 15, pp. 38 – 39.

episcopal links), but it was his connections with the Roman Curia that set the context for his contacts in Tuscany, through synods, councils and legations (albeit with constant recourse to the images of his eremitic holiness).

If the lack of donations on the part of the margraves might cast doubt on their approval of Damian's eremitic project, then at least they offered their protection to Fonte Avellana's rights and properties a short while after his death in a charter is dated 7<sup>th</sup> July 1072. The document records that the Countesses Beatrice and Matilda (by then aged 26) extended their protection over all the possessions of Fonte Avellana, with the threat of a fine of two thousand Byzantine gold coins for those who damaged or usurped its property.<sup>409</sup> This was presumably done under the authority of Matilda's title of duchess of Spoleto, her husband having already separated from her. The charter was drawn up in the presence of Damian's nephew Damianus, and a number of local notables, and was a part of a post-Damian strategy for security and stability on the part of his successors.

Given that the 1060 charter was composed before the letters that link Damian to Gamugno, it may be that his involvement increased as a direct result of the removal of Acereta's authority. Perhaps the kinds of issues these sources reveal Damian as dealing with were previously undertaken by the abbot of Acereta.

The ties between houses were not always so beneficial to Damian, and the relationship with Acereta was not the only problem that Gamugno posed. A letter from Damian to

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<sup>409</sup> Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana* No. 34, pp. 88 – 90. David Herlihy has noted the high number of instances of gold being mentioned in transactions in Tuscany across the eleventh century. D. Herlihy, 'Treasure Hoards in the Italian Economy, 960-1139' *The Economic History Review* 10 (1957), pp. 1 – 14, at p. 4. Damian himself mentions money quite frequently during the 1060s, complaining of *nummicola monache* (money-loving monks; a very rare term), and referring to coin in a number of stories. See Letters 96, 111, 129, 153, 165 and 169.

the brothers at St Barnabas, dated to May 1066 (Letter 142), reveals the limitations of Damian's personal influence over the houses under him:

A man, travelling from Milan on his way to visit me, passed your monastery. As he himself told me, he sought in my name to obtain lodging with you. Worn out by his travels, he stayed on somewhat longer to rest but made it a point to keep an eye on your behaviour, noting carefully that some of you – without mentioning names – chattered away like old women about trifles and idle nonsense, saw others consorting with laymen, telling unseemly jokes, and engaging in city-like wantonness [*urbana ludibria*].<sup>410</sup>

Although Damian did visit, the manner in which Damian heard of the brothers' lax discipline seems indicative of the de facto autonomy that they exercised in their daily lives, particularly once free from the bonds of Acereta, which was much closer to Gamugno. The letter chastises the brothers for their reported gluttony and other abuses – the making of mulled wine amongst them. That Damian casts their faults as 'urban' resonates with his broader semiotics of hermits and space, contrasting the dangerous complexity of the town with the rustic simplicity of the countryside. In the letter Damian also returns to the dangers of accepting gifts from powerful laymen:

It also not a little disturbs me that, in exceeding the limits of obedience despite my commands, you indiscriminately accept alms [*helemosinas*] from laymen, eagerly enlarge your holdings, and, in a word, both in private and

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<sup>410</sup> Adapted from Blum 6, p. 128; "Vir quidam a Mediolanensi urbe progrediens, dum me quaereret, per vos transitum habuit, sed et habitare vobiscum, ut ipse professus est, sub meo nomine concupivit. Qui dum lassus itinere moram velut quiescendo protraheret, sed ab explorationis vestrae custodia clausos oculos non haberet, nescio quos vestrum aniles nugas et ociosa perpendit deliramenta profundere, cum laicis etiam scurriles iocos et ludibria vidit urbana miscere." Reindel 3, pp. 503 – 504.

publically scurry to become rich. By doing so, you torture yourselves with the bitter pangs of worldly desire, deprive both yourselves and your posterity of the sweetness of an unencumbered life, implicate yourselves in the snares of lay concerns, and what is worse, you create the basis for endless quarrelling with laymen, or rather of serving them – not bearing in mind the words of the illustrious preacher, addressed to those who have truly forsaken the world: “Having food and sufficient clothing, with these let us be content. But those who seek to become rich fall into the snares of the devil and into temptation and into many useless and harmful desires, which plunge men into destruction and damnation.” And he continues, “For avarice is the root of all evils, and some in their eagerness to get rich have strayed from the faith and have involved themselves in many troubles.” [1 Tim 6:8-9]

What distinction, indeed, can be found between accepting gifts or offerings from an enemy and soiling one’s own soul with the filth of the giver? Thus it was written, “Tainted his gifts who offers in sacrifice ill-gotten goods! Mock presents from the lawless win not God’s favour.”[Ecclesiasticus 34:21]<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Adapted from Blum 6, pp. 130 – 131; “Hoc etiam me non levius movet, quia praetergresso nichilominus oboedientiae limite, helemosinas a saecularibus indifferenter accipitis, possessionis vestrae funiculos inhianter extenditis, et ut cuncta brevis sermo concludat, in occulto simul et publico fieri divites festinatis. Haec autem facientes, amarissimis vos terrenae concupiscentiae punctionibus laceratis, non solum vobis sed et posteris vestris dulcedinem quietis adimitis, curarum saecularium vos laqueis innodatis, et quod deterrimum est, pugnandi semper cum saecularibus, vel potius serviendi materiam constituitis, non considerantes illud egregii praedicatoris, quod veris abrenuntiatoribus ait: Habentes alimenta et quibus tegamur, his contenti simus. Nam qui volunt divites fieri, incidunt in laqueos diaboli et temptationes ad desideria multa inutilia et nociva, quae mergunt homines in interitum et perditionem. Ubi et sequitur: Radix enim omnium malorum avaricia est, quam quidam appetentes erraverunt fide, et inseruerunt se doloribus multis. /Enimvero dona vel oblationes ab iniquo suscipere, quid est aliud quam propriam animam ex dantis squalore foedare? Hinc enim scriptum est: Immolans ex iniquo oblationem est maculata, et non sunt beneplacitae subsannationes iniustorum.” Reindel 3, pp. 507 – 508.

This complaint may have been particularly significant given what can be observed in the other sources relating to Damian and Gamugno. It seems Damian had trouble controlling the lives of those in a community so far from Fonte Avellana. Putting the hermitage under the jurisdiction of a nearby monastery did not work, and despite personal visits, problems of obedience persisted, potentially to the detriment of the Avellanan reputation. The subjective limits of what was ‘necessary’ were clearly a problem, and probably not one that was easy to resolve. Here too Damian introduces a new worry: Gamugno was involving itself ‘indiscriminately’ in gift relationships, looking outwards towards the local lay elite, and not inwards towards Fonte Avellana.

Many of Damian’s letters suggest attempts to maintain a boundary between the eremitic community and the ‘outside world’. The evidence suggests that Damian and his hermits really thought that they were doing something different from ‘mainstream’ Benedictine monasticism, and there is every reason to believe that they considered the independence and influence of Fonte Avellana as an essential objective. The examples we have looked at were not straight forward, but the primacy of Damian and Fonte Avellana, at least on some level, was always inserted into legally binding documents, and attempts were made on both sides of the relationship to maintain these links after Damian’s death.<sup>412</sup> If gifts were allowed to pass across this boundary freely, in cases like that of Gamugno there was a real danger of the Avellanan network of houses, such as it was, dissolving altogether in a confusion of rights, interests and obligations. The idea of “soiling one’s own soul with the filth of the giver” echoes the theme of pollution we

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<sup>412</sup> Compare the fate of the small collection of monasteries under the guidance of Dominic of Sora earlier in the eleventh century, which were, within a generation after his death, subsumed into the holdings of larger, more firmly established institutions (particularly Monte Cassino). See Howe, *Church Reform*, pp. 123 – 159.

saw in Letter 37 with Damian's offer of horses to the abbot, and in that example too the emphasis was on the avoidance of an outward-looking, world-embracing attitude. This was similar to what the *Rule* of St Benedict had to say on the handling of gifts by monks:

In no circumstances is a monk allowed, unless the abbot says he may, to exchange letters, blessed tokens or small gifts [*munuscula*] of any kind, with his parents or anyone else, or with a fellow monk. He must not presume to accept gifts sent him even by his parents without previously telling the abbot. If the abbot orders acceptance, he still has the power to give the gift to whom he will; and the brother for whom it was originally sent must not be distressed, lest occasion be given to the devil. Whoever presumes to act otherwise will be subjected to the discipline of the rule.<sup>413</sup>

There is a specific dismantling of practices that maintained links to the family life of the monk before his entry into the community. This is related to the larger aim of the *Rule*: the submission of the individual to the community, and to the abbot. This is perhaps clearer if we read the instruction on gifts in conjunction with chapter 33 on monks and private property:

Above all, this evil practice must be uprooted and removed from the monastery. We mean that without an order from the abbot, no one may

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<sup>413</sup> Fry, *Rule*, p. 75; "Nullatenus liceat monacho neque a parentibus suis neque a quoquam hominum nec sibi invicem litteras, eulogias vel quaelibet munuscula accipere aut dare sine praecepto abbatis. Quod si etiam a parentibus suis ei quicquam directum fuerit non praesumat suscipere illud, nisi prius indicatum fuerit abbati. Quod si iusserit suscipi, in abbatis sit potestate cui illud iubeat dari, et non contristetur frater cui forte directum fuerat, ut non detur occasio diabolo. Qui autem aliter praesumpserit, disciplinae regulari subiaceat." *Regulari Sancti Benedicti* ch. LIV.

presume to give, receive or retain anything at all – not a book, writing tablets or stylus – in short, not a single item, especially since monks may not have free disposal even of their own bodies and wills.<sup>414</sup>

Much of what is important about gifts in the *Rule* is the power of the act of giving and receiving to differentiate people. Whilst the above prescriptions are not the focus of Damian's two letters (Letters 18 and 50)<sup>415</sup> that are generally treated as his *Rules* for the eremitical life, the maintenance of Benedict's rules for individual gift exchange is mentioned in passing.<sup>416</sup> But the broader picture afforded by the cases of Camporeggiano, Gamugno and Acereta shows that a clear break between the institutions and 'the world' was, naturally, a fantasy. Not only was lay (and ecclesiastical) input of men and material essential for the existence of the Avellanan congregation, but even when these crossed the boundary into ascetic other-worldliness, people like the brothers of Montecavallo continued to make a significant local impact, and were hardly separated from family ties. In a sense the central point Damian made regarding the danger of gifts in this context was the very flexible fear that the monks and hermits were 'indiscriminately' [*indifferenter*] accepting offerings from others. In using the terminology of almsgiving [*helemosinae*], in his warnings to the hermits of Gamugno, Damian also implicitly recognised the potential for such offerings to be wolves in sheep's clothing. It demonstrates the complexity inherent in having landed institutions act as intermediaries for giving to God, as it became impossible to separate

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<sup>414</sup> Fry, *Rule* p. 56 "Praecipue hoc vitium radicitus amputandum est de monasterio, ne quis praesumat aliquid dare aut accipere sine iussione abbatis, neque aliquid habere proprium, nullam omnino rem, neque codicem, neque tabulas, neque graphium, sed nihil omnino, quippe quibus nec corpora sua nec voluntates licet habere in propria voluntate" *Regulari Sancti Benedicti* Ch. XXXIII.

<sup>415</sup> Reindel 1, pp. 168 – 179; Reindel 2, pp. 77 – 131.

<sup>416</sup> Blum 1, p. 165; "De caeteris vero monachicae institutionis observationibus quicquid in regulari et districto monasterio tenetur, idem etiam hic caute et sollerter nichilominus custoditur...de non dando vel accipiendo sine iussione prioris" Reindel 1, p. 174.

piety and politics. This may simply have boiled down to a desire on Damian's part to personally vet those who sought to associate themselves with his network of houses (and so too with Damian himself) for religious, political or economic reasons; the prerogative of authority was already present in the *Rule* in any case. But how did Damian himself discriminate between gifts and givers?

#### Damian and Gifts:

The association of Damian's identities as hermit and cardinal-bishop also brought together eremitic and ecclesiastical ideas regarding exchange, and particularly gifts. The study of medieval gift exchange has been, and continues to be, a very profitable line of enquiry for historians. That the field continues to be productive relates to two key strands of thought in the historiography. The first, established as early as Marcel Mauss's singularly influential essay on 'the Gift', is the understanding of gift exchange as a 'total social phenomenon', where religious, legal, moral and economic institutions (and these are just the ones listed by Mauss; the historian may find more or fewer in any given historical instance) find simultaneous expression.<sup>417</sup> The second and more recently explored point, which departs somewhat from Mauss's outlook, emphasises that gift exchange as a discourse is endlessly contested and destabilised by its very practice (and not simply in the competitive mode of the *potlatch*; it is not only the 'success' of the gift, but the meaning of the act which is at stake).<sup>418</sup> The sheer number of different relationships, intentions and meanings uncovered by research into gift exchange has led historians to face up to the impossibility of defining an essential

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<sup>417</sup> M. Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* trans. I. Cunnison (London, 1969), p. 1.

<sup>418</sup> See, for example, C. Wickham's conclusion in W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds.), *Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages* pp. 477 – 483.



character of ‘the Gift’,<sup>419</sup> and opt instead to contextualise it in historical terms. ‘Negotiation’ is now the watch-word, with particular attention paid to the vocabularies employed to discuss offerings and exchanges.<sup>420</sup> With the broadening of scope there is also a danger that the category of ‘the gift’ could become too diffuse, or simply be defined by what it isn’t.<sup>421</sup> But such breadth is essential for the current conception of gifts as a ‘language’, and it is this idea that is most useful in considering the gifts (a large Latin vocabulary is encompassed by my use of this term: *munus*, *donum*, *munusculum*, *beneficium*, *benedictio*, *elemosyna*) that Damian gave, received, and wrote about.

In the manner that this was done, a variety of social forms and objectives are articulated. Amongst Damian’s letters from the 1040s, that is, relatively early in his religious career, there are a few instances of him discoursing with and about gifts, particularly in relation to bishops. In Letter 12 (c. 1045) Damian presented himself to a certain Bishop John<sup>422</sup> by sending him a gift of his own works:

My dear friend, he who desires to scale a lofty mountain, must necessarily climb to its summit by gradual stages. Wherefore, since I wish to come to the attention of your highness, as to a man of the Church, who by the hand of God was raised to the ecclesiastical heights of Mount Sion, I dispatch a small gift [*munusculum*] in advance, as one would use a ladder. For it is

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<sup>419</sup> For a detailed look at the political significance of Mauss’s take on gifts, and the problems with using his findings as a ‘model’ for all uses of gifts see P. Geary, ‘Gift Exchange and Social Science Modelling: The Limitations of a Construct’ in G. Algazi *et al* (eds.), *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-modern Figurations of Exchange* (Göttingen, 2003), pp. 129 – 140.

<sup>420</sup> See, for example, B. Jussen, ‘Religious Discourses of the Gift in the Middle Ages: Semantic Evidences (Second to Twelfth Centuries)’ in G. Algazi *et al* (eds.), *Negotiating the Gift*, pp. 173 – 192.

<sup>421</sup> Algazi uses it as a category for transactions that “could neither be subsumed under market exchange nor included under compulsory tribute”, G. Algazi, ‘Introduction: Doing Things with Gifts’ in G. Algazi *et al* (eds.), *Negotiating the Gift* p. 13.

<sup>422</sup> Possibly of Cesena, see Blum 1, n. 2.

indeed not from any desire to appear ostentatious, nor for any physical convenience that might ensue that I both address my small pieces to you and seek your favour. Him rather do I please, whom certainly I acknowledge as the judge of my innermost secrets.<sup>423</sup>

There is here, again, a strong sense of self-deprecation, or rather deprecation of the gift in this letter. Wilson-Clay has suggested that such humility in relation to gifts was intended to insulate monks from the competitive aspects of giving, and that in doing so they reduced the exchange purely to the level of the symbolic, “continually begging the receiver to regard only the dutiful affection that lay behind it”.<sup>424</sup> Sacred books, he argues, were different because their quality could not be appropriately belittled. Whilst this reading may be a little too textual (no matter what language a particular gift might be couched in, the physical nature of the gift surely spoke for itself), the point about texts provides a contrast to Damian’s characterisation of his own writings:

And so, since I am without worldly gifts [*munera terrena*] to offer, I send you wretched presents [*despicabilia dona*] of my little works.<sup>425</sup>

The humility hardly disguises the rarely-seen ambitious side to Damian’s relationship with the secular Church, which is often overshadowed in the historiography by his much later requests to be relieved of his episcopal duties. Indeed, such a gift reflects back

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<sup>423</sup> Blum 1, p. 127; “Dilectissime, qui excelsum montem subire festinat, necesse est, ut ad eius verticem graduum interposicione conscendat. Quapropter ego, quia ad celsitudinis vestrae noticiam pervenire desidero, utpote aecclesiastico viro et super montem Syon divinitus elevato aecclesiasticum munusculum scalarum more praemitto, quia vero non vanae gloriae ostentacione, non corporalis commodi utilitate, vel mea ad vos opuscula dirigo, vel vestram gratiam requiro, illi melius satisfacio, quem de oculis cordium iudicare sine ulla dubietate cognosco.” Reindel 1, p. 140; NB Blum follows *occultis* rather than *oculis*, see p. 127, n. 4.

<sup>424</sup> Wilson Clay, ‘Gift-giving and books’, p. 325.

<sup>425</sup> Adapted from Blum 1, p. 128; “Ego itaque, quia munera terrena non habeo, despicabilia tibi opusculorum meorum dona transmittito” Reindel 1, p. 141.

even more sharply on the giver than the ‘worldly gifts’ that Damian apologises for in the letter. What we have is not a reduction to the symbolic level of the relationship, but a renewed emphasis on the qualities of the giver. It also recalls the difficult relationship Damian had with the quality of his own writing, and the education that it represented, that we saw earlier in this thesis.

Other instances are more opaque. Letter 5 (1043) to an unidentified Bishop ‘B’ gives a suggestive, if frustratingly incomplete image of the importance of gifts in the workings of the Church. Here Damian gave thanks for the bishop’s almsgiving, and recommended two clerics for ordination as deacons:

I therefore request of your holiness that you advance to the diaconate these two clerics who declare that they have received permission from their own bishop, and that you determine that they obtain the requisite ordination to this office *gratis*, as is only proper.<sup>426</sup>

Without being able to pin down the bishop in question, and so formalise his relationship with Damian and with Fonte Avellana (if that is where Damian was at the time), it is difficult to state exactly the reasons for Damian recommending these men. From the wording (“hos duos clericos”<sup>427</sup>) it would seem that this letter may have been carried by the clerics in question to the Bishop. It is also not clear what it was that the bishop gave, but this is one of the few instances of Damian receiving something without the donation causing a problem:

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<sup>426</sup> Blum 1, p. 94; “Rogamus itaque sanctitatem tuam, ut hos duos clericos, qui se a suo episcopo licenciam accepisse fatentur, ad ordinem diaconatus promoveat et debitam huius officii consecracionem gratis, ut dignum est, habere decernat.” Reindel 1 p. 113.

<sup>427</sup> Reindel 1, p. 113.

My dear friend, as I recall the favours which your generosity bestowed on me, I must acknowledge that with all my heart I resort to repaying your affection by the gift of my daily prayers.<sup>428</sup>

It is unclear what these *beneficia* may have been, but as the letter continues there is an implication that Damian is in fact referring to alms, perhaps small amounts of money, or consumables. But whilst thanking the bishop for the alms, Damian also gave a warning:

So be on your guard, my dear friend, lest the good with which the liberality of your almsgiving could endow be consumed by the enticements of vice, and that the edifice built by a merciful hand be destroyed by the battering ram of concupiscence...Let temporal goods be so given, to the end that through them eternal benefit may be acquired, lest, God forbid, while temporal things have the greater weight in the scales of the exacting Judge, the weight of good deeds be of no account.<sup>429</sup>

This testifies to Damian's rather ambivalent attitude towards alms as a form of penance. Although he wrote several letters recommending the practice,<sup>430</sup> he also complained in a letter to Pope Alexander II that laymen were too often choosing to give money rather than face more exacting penitential impositions.<sup>431</sup> Moreover, if alms could, as he wrote

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<sup>428</sup> Blum 1, p. 93; "Dilectissime, dum collate mihi liberalitatis tue beneficia recolo, in amorem tuum totus, fateor, ad rependenda cotidiana orationis dona recurro." Reindel 1, p. 112.

<sup>429</sup> Blum 1, pp. 93 – 94; "Cave ergo, dilectissime, ne bonum quod helemosinarum tibi largitas conferre poterat, viciorum incentive consumant, et aedificium quod misericordie manu construitur, in pacto libidinis ariete destruat. Ad hoc dentur bona temporalia, quantinus per haec acquirantur aeterna, ne, quod absit, in statera districti iudicis dum praedonderat, pondus boni operis inanescat." Reindel 1, p. 112.

<sup>430</sup> See Letters 110 and 170.

<sup>431</sup> Letter 96 (1063), Blum 5, p. 61. On the importance of 'ascetic violence' to Damian's idea of the inner life, see Spijker, *Fictions*, pp. 19 – 58.

to Gamugno, ‘soil one’s own soul with the filth of the giver’ what was left of their status as a penitential act?

Damian continued in his discourse with bishops over the matter of *munera* in Letter 14 (written before 1045). The bishop to whom the letter was addressed is not identified, but Damian used the familiar rhetorical feature that he was repeating in writing what he has said many times, so it may have been a local bishop. Unusually, Damian and his copyists left no name or even initial for the recipient.<sup>432</sup> As in his letter to the hermits of Gamugno, Damian was concerned with gifts being accepted *indifferenter*.

But to get back to what I was saying, brother, do not be accessible to gifts. Do not open your doors to everything that is offered, but accept some that they might provide for you in your necessity, and refuse others lest they burden you with another’s guilt. When we accept presents, we must first decide on the character of the donors. Our hand should not be open to accept indiscriminately everything that is given, and by careful examination beforehand we should be aware not so much of what is offered, but rather of him who grants the gift.<sup>433</sup>

Expanding on this idea, the letter also presented the threat posed by gifts in the language of contagion and disease. In the tale that Damian related in the letter, a priest had a

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<sup>432</sup> Perhaps this letter was intended as an *exemplar*, or a discourse on a certain theme, as opposed to a letter written to a specific person. Damian does note that he is writing the letter ‘whilst travelling’, but this may be an attempt at verisimilitude. Without an addressee this is, of course, all conjecture.

<sup>433</sup> Blum 1, p. 138; “Ut ergo ad id, quod coepimus, revertamur, noli frater, noli patere muneribus; non omnibus quae praebentur, liber apud te pateat aditus, sed quaedam admittantur, ut in necessitatibus sublevent, quaedam repellantur, ne reatus alieni nos ponderibus gravent. Dum igitur oblata suscipimus, de offerencium meritis prius necesse est disputemus. Manus itaque nostra non omnia quae praebentur, indifferenter accipiat, et non id quod offertur, sed potius a quo offertur, cauta prius examinacione discernat.” Reindel 1, p. 149.

vision that he saw the confessor of such an unworthy donor – Count Hildebrand of Tuscany – scaling a mountain at the behest of St. Benedict:

After climbing up the mountain, the priest suddenly noticed that his whole body was covered with leprosy, and he at once cried out: “Alas,” he said, “why have I been blasted by this terrible plague?” St. Benedict said to him: “The mantle that you got as alms from Count Hildebrand” – for this Hildebrand had just recently died – “has been converted into leprosy for you. Wherefore return this impermanent garment if you wish to get rid of the itching of this enduring leprosy. As you can see, this hateful and pernicious cloak has done you harm, but to him it was of no use at all.” So why do we seek the gifts of any of these evil men, since any offering of theirs is unable to wash away their sins, and for us is turned into leprosy?<sup>434</sup>

But what of the character of these *pravi homines*? Damian’s exhortations do not make clear the criteria by which persons are to be judged as potential donors. When the tortured soul of Hildebrand is encountered later in the vision he admits to having been cruel in life,<sup>435</sup> and the only real description Damian gives of him beyond this is of the count’s wealth and power:

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<sup>434</sup> Blum 1, p. 136; “Post huius autem montis ascensum illico presbyter toto corpore sese comperit esse leprosum moxque prorumpens: ‘Heu, heu,’ inquit, ‘cur huius pestilenciae plaga me perdidit?’ Cui beatus Benedictus: ‘Diplois’, ait, ‘quam suscaepisti de helemosina comitis Hildebrandi’ - nam idem Hildebrandus tunc nuper obierat – ‘haec tibi versa est in lepram; quamobrem redde transitoriam vestem, si vis perpetuae leprae vitare pruriginem. Haec enim odibilis ac perniciose vestis tibi quidem ut conspicias nocuit, illi vero nil omnino profecit.’ Ut quid ergo pravorum quorumlibet hominum munera quaerimus, cum eorum quaevis oblacio et illorum nequeat abholere contagia et nobis vertatur in lepram?” Reindel 1, p. 147.

<sup>435</sup> “Tante scilicet crudelitatis fui, dum in corpore vixi, ut nunc sanctis omnibus odio habear” Reindel 1, p. 147; “I was so cruel while I was alive, that now all the saints loathe me” Blum 1, p. 136.

Hildebrand, count of Tuscany, who was known as the count of Capua, was so rich and powerful that he boasted of having more manors and fortified towns than there are days in the year.<sup>436</sup>

At the end of the letter Damian recounts his personal experience of receiving gifts, in which he is severely reprimanded by his brothers at Fonte Avellana for accepting the gift of some vestments. Again, the vestments appear as contagiously dangerous:

They assailed me rather than thank me, they found fault rather than flatter me, and thought that the offering from such a man was not a gift but a pollution and infection of the soul.<sup>437</sup>

But, once more, the only description of the donor – and so the only hint as to why such a gift was to be polluting – is that he was a *primarius*.<sup>438</sup> Given Damian's generally positive relations with the contemporary margraves of Tuscany, it can hardly be said that Damian was against wealth and power *per se*, despite being acutely aware of its moral limitations. Damian remains so vague because there were no clear-cut rules for the acceptance or refusal of gifts, only judgements made in the context of particular cases. And as these are, by and large, examples of Damian talking *about* giving and receiving, it would be useful to consider in more depth some instances where his approaches to gifts were played out in practice.

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<sup>436</sup> Blum 1, p. 135; "Hildebrandus comes Tusciae, qui dicebatur de Capuana, in tantum dives erat ac praepotens, ut gloriaretur se plures habere cortes atque castella, quam dies sint, qui numerantur in anno." Reindel 1, p. 146.

<sup>437</sup> Blum 1, p. 139; "Invehuntur enim, non gratias agunt, expostulant, non blandiuntur, et oblacionem talis viri non donum sed sordes atque contagium deputant animarum." Reindel 1, p. 50.

<sup>438</sup> "Primarius quidam Rodulfus nomine potens satis et prudens" Reindel 1, p. 149; "A certain nobleman named Rodulfus, a quite powerful and prudent man" Blum 1, p. 138.

### Damian's legation to France:

In 1063 Damian was sent by Pope Alexander II to France to help settle a dispute between the abbey of Cluny and Drogo, the bishop of Mâcon.<sup>439</sup> This was one of four legations that Damian undertook on behalf of the papacy through the late 1050s and 1060s (the others being to Milan in 1059, Florence in 1066/67 and Frankfurt in 1069). The mission, though a long one for Damian, was successful, and the dispute was settled in a council at Chalon-sur-Saône. It began a period of correspondence between Damian and the abbey, which forms part of our source material for the legation. Whilst Damian was preparing to return to his hermitage of Fonte Avellana, Hugh, the abbot of Cluny, offered him some gifts (*munera*), Damian having settled the case in Cluny's favour. This was recorded in one of the few contemporary sources about Damian not to have been composed by Damian himself: a narrative account of the legation, written anonymously by one of his fellow-hermits from Fonte Avellana:

Indeed, the abbot himself began to discuss with his men, how the labour of so great a journey might be lightened with the compensation of gifts. He knew that this man did not love money, spurned gifts, and took up such great labour by his perception of the requirements of piety alone. He decided therefore that the sort of gifts to be offered were not those given to him himself, but [only] through him to God, so that, whilst he rejected those for himself, he still gave them to God. He offered silver gilt liturgical instruments, with sacred vessels and vestments and robes and other utensils. "Accept", he said, "master, these sacred clothes and vessels, which we offer

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<sup>439</sup> See Migne, *PL* 145 (Paris, 1867) 858 – 862.



to omnipotent God, and send through you to be devoted to the divine cult in your holy places.<sup>440</sup>

The author of the piece then presents a lengthy discussion between himself and Damian as to whether they should accept the abbot's offerings. In the narrative, Damian cites the example of their fellow hermit Baruntius (possibly the same Baroncius who became prior of Fonte Avellana in 1068, although there is another brother Baruncius mentioned in a letter of 1069 or later)<sup>441</sup> who is said to have repeatedly warned him against accepting 'earthly things'.<sup>442</sup> He also refers to two key biblical quotes: Acts 20:35: "it is better to give than to receive", and Isaiah 33:15 - 16 "He who walks righteously and speaks with sincerity, he who rejects unjust gain and shakes his hands so that they hold no bribe; he who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking upon evil; he will dwell on the heights, his refuge will be the impregnable rock; his bread will be given him, his water will be sure." (These appear also in Damian's letters, particularly Isaiah 33:15, to which we shall return, although given the length of the passage, it often appears in paraphrase). The matter is then decided, and the narrative of the legation ends:

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<sup>440</sup> "Ipse enim abbas cum suis tractare coepit, quomodo tanti labor itineris alicuius muneris compensatione levigaretur. Sciebat enim hunc hominem pecuniam non amare, munera spernere, solius pietatis intuitu tantum sumpsisse laborem. Talia igitur decrevit offerre munera, quae non ipsi, sed per eum Deo transmitteret, ut, dum sibi nollet, Deo saltem tribueret. Capellam enim argenteam deauratam cum sacris vasis et vestibibus, palliis et utensilibus obtulit. 'Accipe' inquit, 'magister, istas sacras vestes et sancta vasa, quae Deo omnipotenti tribuimus et divino ritui mancipanda per te tuis sanctis locis transmittimus'." 'De gallica Petri Damiani profectione et eius ultramontano itinere' ed. G. Schwartz and A. Hofmeister in *MGH Scriptorum* Vol. XXX.2 p. 1046.

<sup>441</sup> For the hermit Baroncius, see Letter 150 (written in 1067; Blum 6, pp. 181 – 183; Reindel 3, p. 555), where Damian writes to warn him not to take on the penance of another. Interestingly this idea was relevant to Damian's ideas about gift exchange, as by accepting gifts one risks taking on another's sin; see Letter 14 (c. 1045). For the Baruncius who was "not a hermit, but living in a certain village subject to our hermitage" see Letter 168 (Blum 7, p. 237; Reindel 4, p. 239).

<sup>442</sup> "Indeed he never persuaded me, so that I might accept, but on the contrary he always urged that I might spurn, earthly things."; "Numquam enim mihi, ut acciperem, persuasit, immo ut terrena spernerem, semper suggestit." 'De gallica Petri Damiani profectione', p. 1046.

Finally, the fruit of eternal reward should be destroyed for us by any gift and a temporal offering should destroy an eternal reward; whilst the abbot kept refusing and saying no, we left for him the aforementioned gifts, and we utterly refused to burden ourselves with a weight of this kind and I recall that we accepted nothing from him besides things essential to us, and which the long journey required. Thus with the duty of salutations being offered from both parties, we returned, lightened and swift, to the solitude of [our] beloved Fonte Avellana.<sup>443</sup>

However, it was in the immediate wake of this very legation to France that Damian accepted (and this is the only documented instance of such a thing happening) gifts of a very similar nature to those offered by Abbot Hugh. Either during or shortly after the legation Damian wrote a letter (Letter 101) addressed to an archbishop, to thank him for the gift of two vestments (*stolae/vestes*). The archbishop in question is likely to have been either Wido of Milan or Hugo of Besançon. There are three eleventh-century manuscripts containing the letter – in two of them (V1 and C1) the addressee is identified simply with a ‘U’. Given that Damian later wrote to Hugh of Besançon to thank him for his hospitality,<sup>444</sup> it is clear that Damian, who only ever made two trips ‘over the mountains’ (the other being to Frankfurt), must have stayed with Hugh during his 1063 legation. This has, in the past, meant that Hugh has been seen as the likely recipient of Letter 101. Kurt Reindel, however, follows the manuscript Vat. Cod. Chig.

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<sup>443</sup> “Tandem ne aeternae retributionis fructus aliquo nobis munere deperiret et temporalis oblatio premium eternum consumeret, rennuente et contradicente abate predicta munera sibi dimisimus et huiusmodi pondere nos onerare penitus rennuimus nihilque ab eo preter nobis necessaria, et quae itineris prolixitas requirebat, nos accepisse recolo. Sic officiis salutationis ex utraque parte exhibitis levigati et alacres ad dilecti Fontis solitudinem redivimus Avellani.” ‘De gallica Petri Damiani profectione’, p. 1046

<sup>444</sup> Letter 111 – although this might not have been in Besançon itself.

A.VII.218, also from the eleventh century, in which the addressee was indicated by a ‘W’, and the word *mediolanensis* is added.<sup>445</sup>

In either case, the legation presents us with a neat little diptych, and raises the question: why did Damian refuse the gifts of the abbot of Cluny, yet accept those of an archbishop? One suggestion could be the practicality of transport, particularly if the archbishop in Letter 101 was indeed Wido of Milan: in Letters 100 and 103 Damian wrote to Abbot Hugh and complained of the difficulty of his journey back to Fonte Avellana, and the danger posed by the troops of Peter Cadalus (otherwise known as Antipope Honorius II), who had attacked Rome the year before, and against whom Damian had written a number of letters:

And so, as I forded many streams swollen by torrential rain, climbed through rocky overhangs in the snow-filled alps, and, what was worse, always had to be on guard against the massed ambushes inspired by the fury of Cadalus, my resolve suffered through a dense hail, so to speak, of internal conflict.<sup>446</sup>

There is a possibility that the anonymous author of the *Iter Gallicum* was being very literal when he said that they refused to burden themselves with the weight of the gifts; although this leaves much of the reasoning in the narrative by the wayside. To make sense of all this we must turn to the wider corpus of material in the letters that relates to

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<sup>445</sup> See Blum 5, p. 120, n. 1.

<sup>446</sup> Blum 5, p. 108; “Unde noster animus, dum per tot intumescendum vada torrentium, per tot nivalium Alpium scopulosa praeripia, per tot etiam, quod peius erat, Cadaloici furoris conglobatas insidias suspectus incederemr, densam, ut ita loquar, intestini certaminis grandinem pertulit.” Reindel 3, p. 102. See also Letter 103, Reindel 3, pp. 138 – 141. For Cadalus’s attack on Rome see I. Robinson *Eleventh-Century Germany* p. 104 and pp. 116 – 117.

Damian and gift-exchange. Under the influence of functionalist and neo-functionalist anthropological approaches on the historical study of gift exchange, it would be desirable indeed to be able to use these records to map a series of social relationships, boundaries and hierarchies, and Damian's place therein. Naturally, there are problems in using letter collections for such a purpose, yet they offer the best evidence to be found in medieval sources. Although a great variety of 'gift relationships' are represented in Damian's letters, by and large we can see only half of the relationship in each case, as they come down to us through 'sender transmission'. An archetypal and early example is Letter 12, in which Damian attempts, quite explicitly, to curry favour with a certain Bishop John (possibly of Cesena) by sending him a 'small gift' (*munusculum*).<sup>447</sup> How did the bishop respond to this offering from someone who was (at the time) socially beneath him? Was a reciprocal relationship enacted at all? We cannot know. This makes some of the letters tantalizing and frustrating in equal measure. Furthermore, in many cases when Damian is writing about gifts, he is writing either in a treatise or another, similarly prescriptive form.

What's more, the letters are a partial record in both senses of the word. The letters were subjected to an extensive editing process, undertaken by Damian himself, his contemporaries, and, posthumously, by his disciples (John of Lodi in particular). As such what we read has passed through several corrective and ideological filters. But whilst the effects of this process can be seen at work in a broad sense, the ultimate provenance of the extant manuscripts, and often the details of the editing process, is so obscure that it is difficult to say exactly, on a letter-by-letter basis, what the effects of this process have been. It is difficult to deal with letters that seem anomalous, and this

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<sup>447</sup> Blum 1, p. 127; Reindel 1, pp. 139 – 142.

is certainly true of Letter 101. The letter is very well represented in the eleventh-century manuscripts of his letters, but how far this makes it a prescriptive statement is questionable.

This is in part what makes the narrative account of the legation to France interesting, as it provides some context for the letters that we would otherwise have lost. The *Iter Gallicum* only appears in two manuscripts, and the earliest extant copy is contained in *Vat. Cod. Lat.* 4290.<sup>448</sup> This is dated by Poncelet to the eleventh century, though Reindel suggests the twelfth.<sup>449</sup> If we take the text's narrating subject to be loosely coterminous with the authorial subject, then it must have been penned by one of Damian's party. As the text has an origin so close to Damian, and was circulating in a monastic or eremitic context, it remains affected by the problems that we encounter when dealing with the letters. Indeed, many aspects of the narrative seem to be a direct extension of what we find in the letters. The biblical passages that appeared in the *Iter Gallicum*, are found also in the letters of Damian himself. Isaiah 33:15 crops up in four letters, and three of these are addressed to the cardinal-bishops, after Damian had joined their ranks in 1057.

In Letters 48 and 69 (1057 and c. 1059 – 1060 respectively) he addresses, at length, the issue of the integrity of the cardinals.<sup>450</sup> In Letter 48, drawing on Gregory the Great,<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> See Introduction, pp. 13 – 14; See also Gerhard Schwartz's introduction to 'De gallica Petri Damiani profectione' pp. 1034 – 1035.

<sup>449</sup> A. Poncelet, *Catalogus Codicum Hagiographicorum Latinorum Bibliothecae Vaticanae* (Brussels, 1910) p. 122; See also Reindel 1, p. 20, 31, 38. It eventually came into the possession of the linguist and collector Cardinal Sirlito in the sixteenth century, and from there it came to the Vatican.

<sup>450</sup> See Reindel 2, pp. 57 – 59.

<sup>451</sup> See T. Reuter, 'Gifts and Simony' in E. Cohen and M. de Jong (eds.) *Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power and Gifts in Context* (Boston, 2001) pp. 157 – 168, esp. pp. 161 – 162.

he uses Isaiah to argue for a wider definition of what constitutes a simoniacal relationship:

It is clear that we should understand the prophet's statement [Isa 33:15] in this way: we may speak of three kinds of gifts [*munera*], namely, a gift by the hand, a gift by service, and a gift by the tongue. Obviously, a gift by the hand is money; a gift by service is the obedience of submission; a gift by the tongue is flattering approbation.<sup>452</sup>

Timothy Reuter highlighted this extension of meaning as a feature of eleventh-century ecclesiastical discourse on gifts, and in these letters the focus is very overtly on the dangers of becoming entangled in secular business during the work of ecclesiastical arbitration. The corruption inherent in monetary transactions is rather taken as read, and it is the other *munera*, those of service and of flattery, which attract most of Damian's attention in these letters. Letter 69 is likewise full of warnings, and Damian deplores the trappings of service to others:

Moreover, since the prophet says of the upright man, "that he snapped his fingers at every gift," [Isa 33:15] who can protect such a man from being offered gifts [*munera*], since that man is bound to give his own self to the

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<sup>452</sup> Adapted from Blum 2, p. 268; "Plane prophetica illa sententia sic exponitur, ut tria dicantur esse munerum genera, scilicet munus a manu, munus ab obsequio, munus a lingua. Siquidem munus a manu pecunia, munus ab obsequio oboedientia subiectionis, munus a lingua favor adulationis. Et cum ab unoquoque horum manus excutiendas propheta denuntiet, omnibus his manus implicasse convincitur, qui nanciscendae dignitatis ambitu potestatum sublimium castra sectatur." Reindel 2, p. 58.

authority of a stranger's servitude and is to lavish the burdensome expenses of service, day in, day out, to finance campaigns of long duration?<sup>453</sup>

So the idea of Damian refusing gifts does not immediately appear particularly unusual. But, in this respect, the *Iter Gallicum* is perhaps more unusual than it first appears: whilst there are many examples of Damian advising against the acceptance of gifts in his letters – advice he gave to members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy as well as to monks and hermits – there are actually very few concrete examples of him actually refusing gifts himself. The only other example comes in Letter 76, written, prior to the events we have been looking at, to the distinguished hermit Dominic Loricatus and his hermits at Suavicinum in 1060 (for whom Damian later wrote a *vita*<sup>454</sup>), and there are striking similarities with the *Iter Gallicum*.

In the letter, Damian recounts an autobiographical tale about the problems of accepting gifts. It is an account that reveals two strands of thought about gift giving – the customs spoken about and practised by papal legates, and the customs that Damian sees as part of the life of the ‘new hermits’. Whilst Damian was in Milan acting as papal legate in 1059,<sup>455</sup> the abbot of St. Simplicianus sent him a small silver vessel by way of a gift.<sup>456</sup> Suspecting the abbot of bribery, he initially lays out the custom, with regards to gifts, for legates of the papacy:

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<sup>453</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, p. 89; “Preterea cum de viro iusto propheta perhibeat, quia *excudit manus suas ab omni munere*, quis eum a munerum valeat praestatione defendere, qui et semetipsum alienae servitutis imperio dedere, et in diuturnae expeditionis impensas facultates suas convincitur profligare?” Reindel 2, p. 229.

<sup>454</sup> See Letter 109.

<sup>455</sup> See Letter 65.

<sup>456</sup> “Ibi dum essem, abbas sancti Simpliciani vasculum mihi argenteum loco muneris misit.” Reindel 2, p. 381.

Now it is customary for us who act as servants of the Apostolic See to accept absolutely nothing from those whose affairs are still in process; but from those whose business has been completely cleared, it is customary not to refuse if they wish to give.<sup>457</sup>

This custom is mentioned by Damian in Letter 97 – the other letter to the curia that made use of Isaiah 33:15.<sup>458</sup> What it shows is certain limits in the customary morality of gifts in relation to the cardinals. As we saw in the *Iter Gallicum*, Damian’s position as a *hermit* and cardinal-legate could nevertheless engender a refusal: “this man did not love money, spurned gifts, and took up such great labour by his perception of the requirements of piety alone.” In Milan as a religious diplomat, however, Damian found a way to take the gift in a manner that gave offence to neither party:

While both of us argued our positions, he asserting that he would not take back what he had given, and I, stating that I would not keep it, finally put an end to our friendly encounter this way: “I have two new monasteries,” I said, “one, with the help of God, already completed, while the other still awaits consecration by the bishop. If you like, you can help in furnishing these sacred places. Send either one your gift as a token of your esteem, and

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<sup>457</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, p. 163; “Mos quippe est apud nos ministris videlicet apostolicae sedis, ab his, quorum adhuc negotium pendet, nil prorsus accipere; ab his autem, qui omnino quieti sunt, si dare voluerint, non abicere.” Reindel 2, p. 381.

<sup>458</sup> “Still there are some who take care not to accept an offered gift while the case is under consideration; but once the action is complete, they will not refuse when something is offered with no strings attached. But in certain situations it often happens that what they thought had been accepted gratis, they are now forced to offset in other cases, and the danger of the flood they had hoped to leave behind them, they unexpectedly find ready to engulf them.” Blum 5, pp. 77 – 78; “Nonnulli vero hanc circa se reperiuntur habere custodiam, ut iudicialis adhuc causae pendente negotio nil etiam ab offerente suscipiant, sopitis vero litibus gratis oblata non spernant. Sed emergentibus causis sepe contigit, ut, quod se putaverant gratis accepisse, in aliis cogantur negotiis compensare, fluviiq[ue] periculum, quod se speraverant reliquisse post tergum, insperate coram se reperiunt enatandum.” Reindel 3, p. 74.



it will be to your spiritual benefit.” By this means I disguised my shameful cupidity and cleverly accepted the gift by acting as if I had not taken it.<sup>459</sup>

This recalls, in certain respects, the idea given by the character of the abbot in the *Iter Gallicum*. There the plan was to have the gifts given to God, rather than Damian himself, who would have been acting only as an intermediary. Here the gifts were to be given to an institution, and not to Damian as an individual. In both cases we can see rather inventive, if ultimately unsuccessful attempts to work around the problems laid down by the contradictions inherent in Damian’s situation as an eremitical cardinal. It is the contradictions that win out, however: upon returning to Fonte Avellana Damian suffers a crisis of conscience, and the gift is returned:

So what was I to do? No longer able to bear this mental torture, I decided to return the gift to the holy brother. And from now on, with God’s help, I will be more careful in regard to the filth of gifts. Note what I said above, that the servant of God should be fearful when he receives anything of temporal value, and should rejoice when he loses it. Henceforth, neither for the purpose of building a monastery, nor to take care of the necessities of the servants of God will I keep something as if it were an object [that could be considered] honourable.<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, p. 164 “Cumque utriusque nostrum hinc inde invicem verba confligerent, et ille se quod semel dederat non recipere, ego me assererem non tenere, tandem amicae contentioni hunc ego terminum posui. Duo, inquam, mihi nova sunt monasteria, unum ad calcem iam Deo auxiliante perductum, alterum vero necdum episcopali dedicatione firmatum. Sanctorum itaque locorum, si placet, participium suscipe, atque utrilibet quod animae tuae proficere debeat, donum pro benedictione trans mitte. Hoc igitur argumento cupiditatis meae turpitudinem palliavi, et tamquam non accipiens astutus accaepi.” Reindel 2, pp. 382 – 383.

<sup>460</sup> Blum 3, p. 165; “Quid igitur? Rixam mentis meae ultra non perferens, sancto fratri munus suum remittere statui. Deinde Deo auxiliante dum vixero, contra sordes munerum iam cautius vigilabo. Ecce quod superius dixi, quia servus Dei tunc debet timere, cum temporale quid percipit, tunc gaudere, cum

It is interesting that, as for a legate, there were social mechanisms that allowed Damian to accept the vase, but, at this juncture, a gift appeared so polluting to the life of the hermit that it had to be returned even though the donor was an abbot. What made the silver vessel a ‘filthy gift’ [*sordum munus*] in this latter case is hard to unpick, and the source of the danger is definitely not the character of the donor, as it was in the examples above. It may be significant though that, in the years prior to the legation to Milan in 1059, Damian expressed considerable concern over the dangers of public adulation, and the resultant pride.<sup>461</sup> His report on his activity in Milan is notable in that it expresses none of the habitual humility of his other letters. Perhaps the refusal of the abbot’s gift was a way of dealing with the contradiction of his position, a material enactment of his rejection of public honour. There is no straight-forward immovable schema for the acceptance or refusal of gifts in Damian’s letters. Rather, each case brings forth an array of social, religious and political considerations as they are performed in the practices of giving and receiving. But these examples show the contradiction within Damian’s position as an eremitic legate. Of particular interest is the fact that in Letter 76 Damian refers to both Isaiah 33:15 and Acts 20:35 (“it is better to give than to receive”). The only other time these appear together is in the *Iter Gallicum*.

In the events we’ve been tracing in 1063, both the acceptance and refusal of gifts create problems for Damian that call for similar courses of action. In Letter 101, even though he accepts the gifts from the archbishop, they do not appear to have been taken as fully

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perdit. Amodo itaque neque pro specie monasterii construendi<sup>f</sup>, neque pro necessitate servorum Dei tenebo quasi materiam honestatis, ubi valeam vires exercere cupidinis.” Reindel 2, pp. 383 – 384.

<sup>461</sup> See Letters 8 and 44, on which see Chapter 1 pp. 41 – 43 and 71 – 87

*gratis*; indeed, if that had been the case, then Letter 101 would probably not have been written. In it, Damian records that:

For these gifts, however, I am not at all ungrateful and have repaid this exchange, in that I have inscribed your name in many hermitages and monasteries, not only in those that belong to our congregation, but in others as well that are distant from us, and with the humble effort of my devotion I have recommended you to the prayers of my brothers.<sup>462</sup>

There is not a denial of the reciprocal relationship engendered by the gift, but the return is not made by further material exchange, but by the labour of prayer (in this sense, comparable the gifts of land *pro anima* found in the charters). Damian also reasons that acceptance should be allowed in this case because he had recently sent back a number of gifts,<sup>463</sup> suggesting, perhaps, that such refusals were not a common standard, or at least not easy to pull off without offence. This example fits with Reuter's the idea that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive' contains the implicit assumption that to receive without giving is less holy, and potentially socially humiliating.

With regards to this last point, however, the resolution of Damian's dealings with Cluny raises some questions. In Letters 100 and 103 – letters that Damian wrote to Cluny after the trip to France – he complains at length of the hardship he endured in coming to France and asks that:

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<sup>462</sup> Blum 5, p. 122; "Quibus tamen ego muneribus non prorsus ingratus hanc vicissitudinem compensavi, ut in pluribus non modo nostris, sed et extraneis atque longinquis et heremis et monasteriis vestrum nomen adscriberem, fratrumque vos orationibus humili devotionis studio commendarem." Reindel 3, p. 117.

<sup>463</sup> Reindel 3, pp. 116 – 117; Blum 5, p. 121.

In compensation for this great effort I especially beg that since you and your incomparably holy community have promised me in writing always to keep alive the memory of the anniversary of my death, and through all succeeding ages to commend me to the dread Judge by your pious prayers for the dead...Wherefore, venerable father, I appeal to your kind charity that the protocol containing your solemn promise, written for the holy monastery of Cluny, also be sent in writing to the other houses that are subject to your authority.<sup>464</sup>

Damian makes a similar appeal again in Letter 113.<sup>465</sup> It is interesting that this was not mentioned in the *Iter Gallicum*. In that text the hermits' refusal to accept the gifts is the end of the matter. Damian's letters to Cluny reveal that there was more. In the narrative it is simply sinful for Damian and his hermits to accept any gifts from the abbot. In Letter 103 it is more subtle: although material gifts were inappropriate, nevertheless Damian considers that his mission to France left Cluny indebted to him. The prayers are referred to as "copious and precious gifts" (*copiosa ac preciosa munera*)<sup>466</sup>, and, Damian asks in Letter 100,

Since God's law commands that good things be returned for evil, how much more does it instruct good things to be returned for good?<sup>467</sup>

If it is better to give than to receive, then why did Damian request recompense in this case? The efficacy of Cluny's prayers was, of course, important enough to make them

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<sup>464</sup> Blum 5, pp. 143 – 144.

<sup>465</sup> Blum 5, pp. 286 – 293.

<sup>466</sup> Reindel 3, p. 140.

<sup>467</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, p. 118; "Enimvero cum bona pro malis iubeat lex divina restitui, quanto magis bona bonis praecipit redhiberi." Reindel 3, p. 113.

desirable in their own right. In this respect the letter itself might have achieved what it was asking, by acting as a physical reminder of Damian's works. We saw this in Letter 37, and it is possible that he intended his letters to Cluny to fulfil the same role. This might explain why the same request was made in three different letters, although Damian does in fact ask for his name to be included on Cluny's necrologies and those of its daughter houses. But the refusal of reciprocity implicit in the *Iter Gallicum* is absent, and Damian appears eager to round off the 'transaction' that his work in aid of Cluny established. Was it dangerous to be in a position of being owed a gift? In the case of his legation to Milan the refusal of the abbot's gift was a way of dealing with the contradiction of his position as an eremitic legate, and a rejection of public honour. Having already given to Cluny through his labours at the council at Chalon-sur-Saône, and with the undercurrents of hierarchy and social prestige associated with giving, his requests following his legation to France may represent a very different response to the same problem. The inherent contradictions between Damian's eremitic morality on the one hand, and the diplomacy, politics and social relationships that his role as legate on the other required him to engage with, produced different responses in different contexts. Gifts provided a language-system within which such contradictions could be played out and, to a certain extent, dealt with. But these particular contradictions formed part of a wider dialogue that runs through all the sources relating to Peter Damian and Fonte Avellana: what could be taken as constituting "the world" for high medieval hermits, and what did it really mean to set oneself apart from it? There could be no definitive answers to these questions, but they were asked and re-negotiated in all the social interactions that have been traced in this thesis.

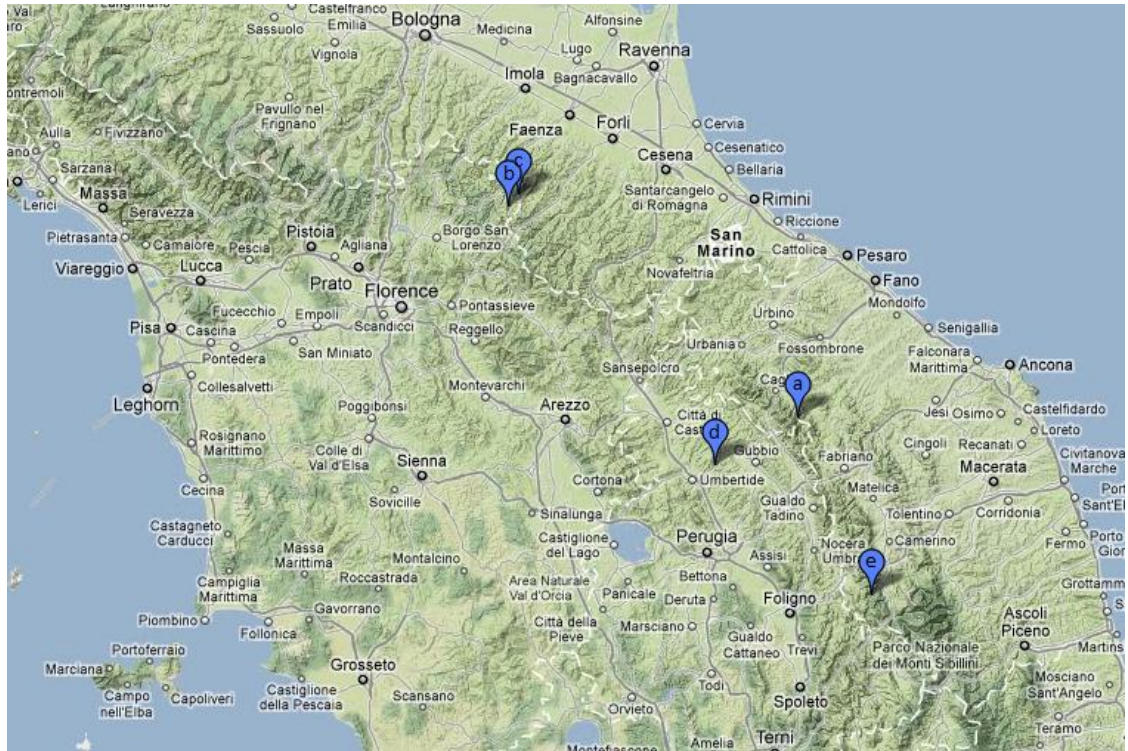


fig 7: Google, Tele Atlas © 2012

Places mentioned in Chapter 3: (a) Fonte Avellana (b) St. Barnabas at Gamugno

(c) St. John at Acereta (d) St. Bartholomew at Camporeggiano (e) Monte Cavallo

## Chapter Four: Peter Damian and the Empress Agnes

So far in this thesis I have considered the contact that Damian had with a host of different people across northern and central Italy, and, indeed, southern France. In this final chapter I will examine Damian's relationship with one of the most high-profile individuals in central Europe at the time, the Empress Agnes (c.1025 – 1077). There are six extant letters that Damian addressed to the Empress Agnes, written between 1060 and 1067, which makes his relationship with her the best recorded of any that he shared with the powerful women of northern Italy and beyond. Using these, and Damian's references to the empress in letters he wrote to others, it is possible to put together a picture of how his association with Agnes – as both a woman of great secular power and a woman of religion – changed in relation to the political circumstances within the Empire. Agnes herself meant many things to many people. Her image was formed and reformed by the words of the men she came into contact with, particularly in the years following Henry IV's coming of age.<sup>468</sup> These were often monastic figures: Damian, John of Fécamp, and the brothers of Monte Cassino had sustained contact with Agnes, and each left their distinctive mark on the evidence, as did Pope Gregory VII, who found in the empress a useful ally. And although the source material available is dominated by the voices of these male religious and political figures (particularly for the period 1062 – 1077, when Agnes appears less frequently, and then not at all, in the

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<sup>468</sup> On the death of Henry III (1017 – 1056), their son Henry IV (1050 – 1106) was still much too young to rule, and Agnes assumed the regency. However, after several years of relative peace and stability, Agnes's rule ran into trouble through military defeat and political intrigue, and 1061, she backed Cadalus of Parma as pope, exacerbating the existing divisions within the Empire. In 1062 she lost her control over the King when Archbishop Anno of Cologne (formerly a favoured figure at Agnes's court) kidnapped Henry IV from the imperial palace at Kaiserswerth, and took over the regency himself. Henry IV came of age in 1065 in a ceremony at Worms, which the Empress attended, and having spent several years on the periphery of the German political scene, Agnes removed herself to Rome that same year. See I.S. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany: 1056 – 1106* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 44 – 45; E. Butz, "Empress Agnes of Poitou: Reflections on the legal basis of her Regency" in G. Jacobsen, *et al* (eds.), *Less Favoured - More Favoured. Proceedings from a Conference in European Legal History, 12th-19th* (Copenhagen 2005), 19A, pp. 1 – 10.

imperial diplomatic evidence), we can still detect traces of her agency in the requests she made, the people and places she visited, and the gifts and favours that she distributed.<sup>469</sup> The questions for this chapter, then, are: how and for whom did Damian attempt to shape the image of the empress, and what can this reveal about the effect of gender on his relationship with the *saeculum*?

#### Damian and the Empire:

Five of the letters were written to Agnes after her decision to travel to Rome in 1065. It is harder to piece together any connection between Agnes and Damian whilst Agnes was reigning, either with her husband Henry III or as regent for Henry IV. But what little material there is provides essential context for what came later. First, we should consider Damian's attitude towards the Empire, and particularly towards Agnes's husband, Henry III. Despite his association with Cardinal Hildebrand (the future Gregory VII), Damian himself cannot be described as pro-papal in a way that excluded Imperial power or sought to keep it at a distance. It is well known that Damian held a high view of the elder Henry, and celebrated his involvement in the affairs of the Church. Brian Tierney drew attention to his praise for the Emperor in the *Liber Gratissimus*,<sup>470</sup> here Henry was compared to the biblical King David and the Emperor Constantine, and he was even lauded for intervening in the appointment of popes:

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<sup>469</sup> In this I concur with Sansterre's rejection of the idea that the Empress was primarily a passive figure. See J. Sansterre, 'Mère du roi, épouse du Christ et fille de Saint Pierre: Les dernières années de l'impératrice Agnès de Poitou. Entre image et réalité' in S. Lebecq et al (eds.) *Femmes et Pouvoirs des Femmes à Byzance et en Occident* (Brussels, 1996), pp. 163 – 174; His article provides a useful overview of the evidence concerning Agnes's actions and travels in later life.

<sup>470</sup> B. Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050 – 1300* (Englewood Cliffs, 1964), pp. 33 – 38.



And since he [Henry III] did not want keep the model of former princes, in order to observe the commands of the eternal king, divine provenance, not ungrateful, conferred on him this, that was not conceded to this degree to many of his predecessors, that the holy Roman Church should now be ordered to his will, and no one should elect a priest to the Apostolic See, except by his authority.<sup>471</sup>

Praise of the ‘most invincible emperor’<sup>472</sup> and his ‘holy empire’<sup>473</sup> continued in the letters Damian addressed to Henry himself. In Letter 20, written in 1046, Damian rejoiced in the emperor’s decision to remove Widger, whom he had appointed two years previously, as Archbishop of Ravenna – a decision that may have been influenced by Damian’s outspoken criticism of the archbishop in his letters.<sup>474</sup> Damian, as we have seen, had had a strained relationship with Widger who was abusing ecclesiastical and monastic property, and perhaps even more heinously, was refusing Damian’s counsel. Judging from a letter that Damian wrote to Henry IV shortly after his assumption of power (Letter 120, c.1065 – 1066), he appears to have looked for a similar involvement in Church matters from the new king.<sup>475</sup> In the letter, Damian drew from the work of Pope Gelasius I, to make one of his most direct statements on the relationship between

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<sup>471</sup> “Et quoniam ipse anteriorum principum tenere regulam noluit, ut aeterni regis praecepta servaret, hoc sibi non ingrata divina dispensatio contulit, quod plerisque decessoribus suis eatenus non concessit, ut videlicet ad eius nutum sancta Romana ecclesia nunc ordinetur, ac praeter eius auctoritatem apostolice sedi nemo prorsus eligat sacerdotem.” Reindel 1, p. 502; cf. B. Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State*, p. 38. Cowdrey has pointed out that in Letter 89 (1062) Damian used the example of Constantine to argue for the freedom of the Apostolic See, although that differs somewhat from this passage in the *Liber Gratissimus*. See H. E. J. Cowdrey, ‘Eleventh-Century Reformers’ Views of Constantine’ in L. Garland (ed.), *Conformity and Non-Conformity in Byzantium* (Amsterdam, 1997), pp. 63 – 91, at pp. 78 – 79; reprinted in *Popes and Church Reform in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century* (Aldershot, 2000), I. Letter 89 will be explored below.

<sup>472</sup> ‘*invictissimus imperator*’ Reindel 2, p. 4.

<sup>473</sup> ‘*sanctum imperium*’ Reindel 2, p. 6.

<sup>474</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 40 – 45; cf. Tabacco, *Northern Italy* p. 77.

<sup>475</sup> Although, as Damian closes the letter by referring to his ‘readers’ in the plural, this was probably intended as an open letter. Also of note is Letter 147, written in 1067 to the clergy and people of Faenza, advising them to wait for the arrival of the king to settle the appointment of their new bishop. He even suggests that they ask the pope to grant a period of episcopal vacancy to allow this to happen.

Empire and Church, both working together “by a certain mutual covenant”,<sup>476</sup> fulfilling different roles, but very much intertwined. Being written so soon after his coming of age, and after Agnes’s departure from Germany, we might read this letter as an attempt to renew the relationship between Church and Empire, following the difficulties of the regency.

As with much of Damian’s correspondence with those in positions of power, his contact with the emperor had been strengthened by face-to-face encounters. Aside from being present at his coronation, Damian had an audience with Henry III at the monastery of St. Apollinaris in Classe (1055), where he requested, and was promised, the release of a certain unknown Gisler from captivity.<sup>477</sup> That both Damian and the emperor were connected in different ways to Ravenna may have been the underlying context for their contact in these cases. Other potential meetings are hinted at in Letter 26 (to Pope Clement II, 1047):

Your blessedness may have been aware, most excellent lord, that the most invincible lord emperor, not once but often, decreed to me and, if I dare say, deemed it worthy to ask, that I should come to you and I should tell to your ears what was being transacted in the churches of our region and that which it seemed to me necessary to be done. Howsoever I trembled at the difficulty of the journey, and objected deeply to coming to you, he did not

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<sup>476</sup> “...mutuo quodam foedere...” Reindel 3, p. 389.

<sup>477</sup> See Letter 43, Blum 2, pp. 218 – 220. Reindel notes that this was probably the same Gisler that was taken captive in 1047, as reported by Bishop Benzo of Alba in *Ad Heinricum IV imperatorem libri VII*, Book 1, Chapter 13, in K. Pertz (ed.), *MGH SS XI* (Hannover, 1854), pp. 591 – 681, at p. 604.

desist from his intention, but commanded, with absolute decision, that I should take the journey.<sup>478</sup>

Such requests may have been made by the Emperor in writing, though no examples survive, and nor do any return letters that Damian might have composed. With Henry's presence in Italy from late 1046 through to the spring of 1047, there would have been ample opportunity for personal meetings. On the other hand, this process might simply have been conducted through oral messengers (a practice attested to elsewhere in Damian's letters). In either case, it was Henry's travels south over the Alps which connected him with Damian. By and large they were in contact concerning matters of the Church, rather than matters of Henry's soul, even though Damian was yet to become a cardinal.<sup>479</sup> Damian's eremitic ideals saw contact with an emperor as perfectly acceptable, and even desirable. The image of a hermit advising an emperor has been discussed above as a feature of Damian's letters to the margrave of Tuscany.<sup>480</sup> Another example can be found in one of his key works on the eremitic life, the *Vita Beati Romualdi*:

Meanwhile the Emperor Henry [II] came to Italy from Germany and sent the holy man [Romuald] a most humble message asking to be considered

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<sup>478</sup> Adapted from Blum 1, pp. 244; "Noverit beatitudo vestra, excellentissime domine, quia dominus invictissimus imperator non semel sed sepe mihi praecepit et, si dicere audeo, rogare dignatus est, ut ad vos venirem et, quae in ecclesiis nostrarum parciū agerentur quaeque mihi necessaria a vobis fieri viderentur, vestris auribus intimarem. Cumque ego et difficultatem itineris perhorrescerem et ad vos venire penitus recusarem, ille a sua intencione non destitit, sed ut iter arriperem, absoluta diffinitione praecepit." Reindel 1, p. 240. It is not clear why Damian protested at the difficulty of visiting Rome, given how often he made the trip, and often travelled much further. Perhaps it was aimed at maintaining his eremitical identity (he himself wrote disapprovingly of frequent travel).

<sup>479</sup> A fact that does not sit well with the idea that Damian was dragged unwillingly into the curia.

<sup>480</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 98 – 99.

worthy to come and see him and promising that in return for an audience he would do whatever Romuald ordered.<sup>481</sup>

Such was the power and authority of the ‘awesome hermit’, to borrow John Howe’s term. By portraying of influential hermits of this kind in his own writings, Damian risked himself becoming a rather awkwardly self-knowing hermit. A secondary consequence of this encounter between Romuald and Henry II worth noting was that the emperor endowed Romuald’s community of hermits handsomely, but, as with Damian’s dealings with other potentates, these rewards do not appear to have been a feature of his own experience with such figures.

#### Damian and Agnes’s Regency:

Damian’s contact with the empress during her stewardship of the Empire was, meanwhile, at best minimal, at worst nonexistent. There is no mention of her in the surviving letters before Henry’s death in 1056. Damian and Agnes may have met before 1065, as he was present at the coronation of Henry as Emperor in Rome on Christmas day 1046,<sup>482</sup> though he makes no mention of the simultaneous crowning of Agnes. There is one letter, number 71, (written in 1060) that Damian may have sent during the empress’s regency. The authorship of the epistle has been a matter for debate, as the address line names the authors as Cardinals Humbert and Boniface of

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<sup>481</sup> Leyser (trans.), ‘St. Romuald of Ravenna’ p. 313; “Interea imperator Heinricus, de ultramontanis partibus Italiam veniens, misit beato viro deprecatorium legationem ut ad eum venire dignaretur, promittens se facturum quaecumque preciperet, si suum ei colloquium non negaret.” Tabacco (ed.), *Vita Beati Romualdi* pp. 106 – 107.

<sup>482</sup> See Letter 70 (to Landulf of Milan, c. 1060): “Now there was a person named Pambo, a man of distinguished background, but in difficult circumstances, who stayed with me in a lodging in Rome at the time when the late King Henry received the imperial crown.” Blum 3, p. 109, cf. *ibid.*, n. 20; “Certe vir quidam, nomine Pambo, clarus quidem genere sed tenuis facultate, Romae constitutus in uno mecum diversabatur hospitio, cum Heinricus piaie memoriae rex coronam suscepit imperii.” Reindel 2, p. 319.

Albano *cum caeteris cardinalibus episcopis* (which would, by this time, have included Damian). The evidence for Damian's authorship comes from the superscripts in two collections of Damian's letters: "A Letter by the same Peter", and from the fact that it was included in these collections of his letters at all.<sup>483</sup> One of those manuscripts, Vat. Cod. Lat. 6749, dates from the fourteenth century, and the other is the key eleventh-century manuscript C1, copied at Fonte Avellana by Monte Cassino scribes in c.1072. The presence of the letter amongst the material at Avellana (now lost) from which the eleventh-century manuscript was composed would point towards Damian's authorship, although some room for doubt necessarily remains.

Letter 71 was a reply to a request from Agnes that the pallium be sent to the newly-elected Archbishop Siegfried of Mainz. The brief and rather dry response (which reduces the chance of identifying the author through their vocabulary), cited the letters of Gregory the Great in defence of the canonical principle that an archbishop must come to Rome to receive his pallium. In polite (if faintly patronising) deference to her imperial status, no blame was attached to Agnes for this 'mistake':

If, therefore, your magnificence demands of the Roman Church that which might opposes canonical regulations, we do not ascribe it, God forbid, to malice, but impute it to the ignorance of your counsellors.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> "Eiusdem Petri Epistola" Reindel 2, p. 323. This is the only example of Damian writing a corporate letter for the curia, although he does appear to have ghost-written for the pope in Letter 64, to Queen Anne of France, in 1059. However, the evidence for his authorship again comes from C1 and *Vat. Cod. Lat. 6749*. See Reindel 2, pp. 225 – 226.

<sup>484</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, p. 113; "Si quid ergo magnificentia vestra Romanam petit aecclesiam, quod canonicis obviet regulis, non malitiae, quod absit, asscribimus, sed consiliatorum vestrorum potius ignorantiae deputamus." Reindel 2, p. 324; It is noteworthy that this is one of the few contemporary documents to attribute power to Agnes directly during her regency, rather than semi-cloaking her activities with the name of her son.

Damian and Agnes's interaction, then, was minimal during her regency, a period when Damian seems to have had little interest in the imperial court. This does not mean that Damian was any less interested in politics. Rather, Henry IV's minority (and the period that followed) was marked by a lack of imperial, and later royal, intervention in Italy.<sup>485</sup> It is, indeed, no accident that whilst Henry III's personal intervention in Italy led to Damian's limited but significant contact with him, so Agnes's absence from Italy coincides with his most sustained period of interaction with the margrave and countess of Tuscany.<sup>486</sup> Reconciled with the empress and king after Henry III's death in 1056, after years of rebellion and war, Godfrey and Beatrice were now the prime political force in the region, allied with the German court. With their domination of local political and military power, they wielded an influence on the papacy that rivalled that of the late Emperor Henry, and far outweighed that of the distant Agnes.<sup>487</sup>

Prior to 1065, Agnes's greatest impact on Italy came in the form of her support for Cadalus of Parma to succeed Pope Nicholas II as Honorius II in 1061. The conflict with Alexander II quickly became a military one, as Cadalus took Rome by force of arms. There were serious ramifications north of the Alps as well. In 1062 Archbishop Anno of Cologne kidnapped the young Henry, removed Agnes from power, and took on the responsibilities of regency himself – demonstrating, as Butz has noted, the importance of the dowager-empresses's proximity to her son in the exercise of power over both family and land.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> Tabacco, 'Northern and Central Italy', pp. 84 – 85.

<sup>486</sup> Damian wrote 5 letters to Godfrey and Beatrice between 1057 and 1068.

<sup>487</sup> See Robinson, *Henry IV*, pp. 36 – 37 and Tabacco, 'Northern and Central Italy', pp. 83 – 85; On the power of the Canossa family, see Ibid, pp. 82 – 83; Stephen IX, after all, was Godfrey's brother, and Godfrey also mediated between Cadalus and Alexander II, following Cadalus's capture of Rome in 1062. They were persuaded to submit to the decision of Henry IV (now under the influence of Anno of Cologne). This ultimately spelt the *de facto* end for Cadalus's claims.

<sup>488</sup> Robinson summaries the historiography on Cadalus's election in *Henry IV*, pp. 42 – 43. It would seem that the support of Lombard bishops was the root of his candidacy, to which the Empress (though in

Given the impact of this conflict on Italy, and the Empire generally, we might have expected Damian to have written to Agnes regarding the antipope, towards whom he directed a great deal of invective. He also composed two open letters and a poem denouncing Cadalus,<sup>489</sup> and wrote to Margrave Godfrey of Tuscany, warning him in the strongest possible terms not to contact the pretender.<sup>490</sup> Damian does broach the subject of the antipope in his first letter to Agnes (104) following her arrival in Rome in 1065 (a letter discussed in more detail below). But there is no apportioning of blame, save him laying it at Cadalus's own feet, and no mention of Agnes's involvement in the affair:

On the other hand, after [the death of Henry III], this fully two years before [now], the moon was turned into blood, because blood signifies sin: "Deliver me from blood, O God," [Psalms 50:16] it seems to me this figured nothing else if not the holy Church about to be stained with the blood of the crime of Cadalus. In fact Cadalus, excommunicated innumerable times for dividing boundless wealth amongst people whilst corruptly acquiring the Roman Church, turned the hearts of men, through greed, into the form of money, as if he turned them into blood.<sup>491</sup>

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the name of the young king) consented, so Cadalus was not simply the 'Imperial' choice. As such Tellenbach warns that it would be wrong to see Agnes as an 'anti-reform' figure, G. Tellenbach, *The Church in Western Europe from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Century* trans. T. Reuter (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 159 – 160.

<sup>489</sup> See Letters 88 and 89.

<sup>490</sup> See Letter 154, written in 1068, suggests that the situation in Italy remained tense, long after Cadalus lost Imperial support. It also reflects the central importance of the margraves of Tuscany to the stability of the papacy. Damian also speaks of his fears regarding Cadalus in letters 87 and 100.

<sup>491</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, p. 160; "Quod autem postmodum, ante hoc ferme biennium, luna in sanguinem versa est, quia sanguis peccata significat: Libera, inquit, me de sanguinibus Deus, in quantum michi videtur, nil aliud nisi sanctam figuravit aeccliam Cadaloici sceleris sanguine cruentandam. Kadalous enim milies anathematizatus dum pro venaliter acquirenda Romana aecclia infinitas per populos pecunias spargit, corda hominum per avariciam in aeris speciem velut in sanguinem vertit." Reindel 3, pp. 156 – 157.

Suggestions that Agnes felt a deep sense of culpability for causing schism in the Church are based on a letter that she sent to Fruttuaria in 1062 after Henry's abduction,<sup>492</sup> where asking for the prayers of the monastery she confided that "My conscience terrifies me more than any ghost and any phantom".<sup>493</sup> She may well have confessed her guilt to Damian when he heard her general confession after her arrival in Rome,<sup>494</sup> which would have put the matter beyond public discussion (at least in Damian's own letters). In any case, it would hardly warrant a mention in a letter seemingly designed, as we shall see, to promote Agnes as an exemplar of female sanctity. This confession is significant in the context of Damian's later relationship with the empress as an ascetic, which will be discussed below, particularly given that Damian was concerned (as were reformers more generally in eleventh-century Italy) with the sincerity of penitents.<sup>495</sup>

Damian never challenged Agnes over Cadalus directly during the period of her regency either, but he was not silent on the matter in letters to others. In 1063 he wrote to Archbishop Anno of Cologne, Agnes's usurper, asking him to convene a council to end support for Cadalus north of the Alps (Letter 99). Indeed, in his first letter to Henry IV (Letter 120, 1065 or 1066), the antipope and the need for the king to deal with him are the central issues.<sup>496</sup> Damian was not ignorant of the empress's involvement in the election, and mentions her in passing, acting with her son, in his two letters addressed to

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<sup>492</sup> See Robinson *Henry IV* p. 44 and M. McLaughlin, *Sex, Gender and Episcopal Authority in an Age of Reform, 1000 – 1122* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 119, although her retreat from political life (which was hardly complete in any case) could be attributed as much to the political realities of Anno's coup than to a feeling of guilt on her part.

<sup>493</sup> "Conscientia mea terret me peius omni larua omnique imagine" T. Struve "Zwei Briefe der Kaiserin Agnes" in *Historisches Jahrbuch* No. 104 (1984), p.424.

<sup>494</sup> See Letter 104, cf. Blum 5, p. 155, n. 55.

<sup>495</sup> We saw this above when he wrote that alms from *parvi homines* could soil the souls of the recipients. See Chapter 3, p. 139. Cf. S. Hamilton 'Penance in the Age of Gregorian Reform' in K. Cooper and J. Gregory (eds.) *Retribution, Repentance, and Reconciliation* (SCH 40, 2004), pp. 47 – 73, esp. 54 – 55, 62 – 67.

<sup>496</sup> The letter makes no reference to Agnes's role, and exonerates the young King, blaming his counsellors. Damian lists insulting names for the antipope and urges the King to sort out the schism.



Cadalus (88 and 89). Pre-empting Cadalus's retort to his accusations of corruption, Damian writes (in Letter 89):

But to these things you boast and declare: "The king and his mother the empress elected me, her royal highness has raised me to this highest honour."<sup>497</sup>

This leads into an extended mock legal debate in which the *defensor Romanae ecclesiae* and the *regius advocatus* lay out their respective arguments regarding papal elections (during which Agnes is not mentioned again). Damian is even more pointed in Letter 88, and, unlike in Letter 71, his exclusion of Agnes from blame is rhetorically based on her feminine inability to command authority effectively:

Saving, obviously, the proper reverence to our kings, from whom of course, be it through the feebleness of their sex or of their age, it could be snatched away. Besides them, whoever drove you to this shameful act must be called the sons of Caiaphas, the firstborn of Satan, helpers of the antichrist, enemies of truth.<sup>498</sup>

Agnes's sex here gets a direct mention, and the passage emphasises her erasure<sup>499</sup> elsewhere in Damian's letters. The empress's right to rule is repeatedly degraded through exclusive reference to the young King Henry during the regency. The papal

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<sup>497</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, p. 336; "Sed ad haec gloriaris et iactas: Rex me et imperatrix mater elegit, ad hunc apicem me regia caelsitudo provexit." Reindel 2, p. 541.

<sup>498</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, p. 318; "Salva plane digna reverentia regibus nostris, quibus utique sive pro sexus sive pro aetatis infirmitate surripi potuit. Preter illos, quicumque te ad hoc flagitium impulerunt, filii Caiaphae, primogeniti dicendi sunt Sathanae, adiutores antichristi, adversarii veritatis." Reindel 2, p. 525.

<sup>499</sup> To borrow a word that Dyan Elliot used to describe Damian's literary treatment of women.

election decree of 1059, to which Damian contributed,<sup>500</sup> completely ignores Agnes, despite being composed in the midst of her rule, and refers only to Henry:

They [the cardinals] shall make their choice from the members of this church if a suitable man is to be found there, but if not they shall take one from another church, saving the honour and reverence due to our beloved son Henry who is now king and who, it is hoped, will in future become emperor with God's grace, according as we have now conceded this to him and to his successors who shall personally obtain this right from the apostolic see.<sup>501</sup>

This was not a ploy born solely of Damian's mind, but must have stemmed from the temporary and contingent nature of her rule, and its necessary relation to Henry IV, who had already been crowned king before his father's death – all the diplomatic material created during the regency being issued in Henry's name, with Agnes listed as the chief intercessor.<sup>502</sup> This gives a rather unfair picture of Agnes as a ruler, as she secured the acceptance of German magnates for a wide range of powers (even, it would seem, the right to nominate a ruler should Henry IV die).<sup>503</sup> Indeed, the lack of attention paid to Agnes in the sources produced by Damian during the period between Henry III's death in 1056 and the problems of 1061/1062 might in fact reflect her greatest success as a ruler – the peace and stability within the Empire; a contrast to the turbulence of the later

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<sup>500</sup> For the lexical evidence of Damian's hand in the decree, see K. Woody, 'Sagena Piscatoris: Peter Damiani and the Papal Election Decree of 1059' *Viator* 1 (1970), pp. 33 – 54.

<sup>501</sup> Tierney, *The Crisis*, p. 42; "Eligant autem de ipsius ecclesiae gremio, si reperitur idoneus, vel si de ipsa non invenitur ex alia assumatur. Salvo debito honore et reverentia dilecti filii nostri Henrici, inpraesentiarum rex habetur et futurus imperator Deo concedente speratur sicut iam sibi concessimus et successorum illius, qui ab hac apostolica sede personaliter hoc ius impetraverint." Woody, 'Sagena Piscatoris', p. 53. The phrasing also recalls the previous passage from Letter 89.

<sup>502</sup> Robinson, *King Henry IV*, p. 27.

<sup>503</sup> Butz, 'Empress Agnes of Poitou', p. 4.

years of her husband's reign, and to the crisis that unfolded in Italy following her appointment of Cadalus.

The contingency of her rule did leave Agnes vulnerable once that peace was disturbed by (amongst other things, including criticism of her counsellors), the Cadalus controversy. Beyond 'erasure', what Damian's letters convey is a more specific erosion of the significance of Agnes's maternal relationship with her son, which given the essentially domestic and familial (rather than strictly legal) nature of her power, was a significant development.<sup>504</sup> Thus, in Letter 89, when Damian (or, rather the *defensor Romanae aecclesiae*) argues that the infant king should defer to the authority of his mother, he means Mother Church:

Furthermore, however, the Roman Church is mother of the king far more nobly and sublimely than is his carnal mother. That mother, indeed, bore him so that through his birth he might revert to dust, this mother [i.e. the Church] gave birth to him so as to make him coheir of Christ, ruling without end. And all of us clearly know that the king, even if of distinguished nature, is still as yet a boy. Therefore what evil has the Roman Church done, if she took up the right from her son, that they agreed, since he was still young, and since he was still in need of a tutor, took upon herself the duties of a tutor?<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>504</sup> On Agnes's role as mother, see McLaughlin, *Sex, Gender and Episcopal Authority*, pp. 120 – 121. On churchmen and their characterisations of women in power, making the general point that their responses were heavily dependant on political context, see L. Huneycutt, 'Female Succession and the Language of Power in the Writings of Twelfth-Century Churchmen' in J. Parsons (ed.) *Medieval Queenship* (Stroud, 1994), pp. 189 – 201.

<sup>505</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, p. 343; "Porro autem Romana aecclesia multo nobilius atque sublimius quam mater carnis mater est regis. Illa siquidem peperit, ut per eius traducem revertatur in pulverem, ista genuit, ut Christi sine fine regnantis efficiat coheredem. Et cuncti liquido novimus, quia rex licet egregiae indolis

Damian's letter to Archbishop Anno (Letter 99, 1063) certainly didn't lament the end of Agnes's rule, or the loss of her rights to her son, and even celebrated Anno's care for the 'orphan' child!

You have saved, venerable father, the boy left in your hands, you have strengthened the kingdom, you have restored to the orphan the Empire of ancestral right. You have also immediately extended the hand of your prudence to the priesthood, and while you have endeavoured to cut off the scaly necks of the beast [Cadalus] of Parma with the sword of evangelical vigour, you have also laboured to restore the bishop of the Apostolic See to the throne of his dignity.<sup>506</sup>

These letters were only concerned with Agnes tangentially, insofar as she had influenced the crisis unfolding within the papacy (a crisis that had serious and violent ramifications in northern and central Italy – in contrast to the relative peace of her reign in Germany). Damian sought to support Alexander II's bid to control the Apostolic See through legalistic arguments (particularly in Letter 89 – a result of his training in the schools of Ravenna and Parma?), and perhaps this encouraged him to focus on Henry IV at the expense of Agnes, as it was in his name, after all, that the Empire was being ruled. But equally, his rhetorical marginalisation of her role as a mother, and his direct support of Archbishop Anno, suggest that Damian was keen to see the back of Agnes as

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tamen adhuc puer est. Quid ergo mali Romana fecit ecclesia, si filio suo, cum adhuc inpubes esset, cum adhuc tutoris egeret, ipsa tutoris officium subiit et ius, quod illi competebat, implevit?" Reindel 2, p. 548.

<sup>506</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, p. 104; "Servasti, venerabilis pater, relictum tuis manibus puerum, firmasti regnum, restituisti pupillo paterni iuris imperium. Ad sacerdotium quoque manum tuae prudentiae protinus extendisti, dum et Parmensis bestiae squamea colla evangelici vigoris mucrone praecidere, et apostolicae sedis antistitem in suae dignitatis elaborasti solium reformare." Reindel 3, p. 99.

a ruler. The conditional nature of her rights, ruling as a mother and former *consors regni*, allowed him to attack her legitimacy on the grounds of her sex by using the gendered image of the Mother Church.

Did Agnes's rule even hold much significance for Damian? Gerd Tellenbach has argued that the kidnapping of the king and, moreover, the lack of protest at the action from bishops and magnates throughout Germany (and, indeed, from Agnes herself) betrays the low esteem that the crown was held in at the time.<sup>507</sup> Damian remained involved in politics throughout this period, particularly when that politics, as it so often did, involved the papacy and the Church in Italy. Agnes, supporting Cadalus, had some impact on events in this part of the world. As the period of her regency came to an end, Agnes was to become important to Damian in quite a different way.<sup>508</sup> After she travelled to Rome in 1065, he sought to shape her public image into that of a saintly – and repentant – exemplar.

#### Damian and Agnes's Spirituality: The Beginning of the Relationship:

With Anno of Cologne's kidnap of King Henry, and his effective assumption of the rule of the Empire, Agnes was left with no clear role. Such a situation could put a royal mother in a perilous position.<sup>509</sup> Following her loss of the regency, however, the German kingdom was not altogether a dangerous place for Agnes to be. By this point she had already taken a vow of celibacy (she had done so after the Cadalus affair – perhaps to allay fears of a succession crisis), and was engaging in more ascetic

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<sup>507</sup> Tellenbach, *The Church in Western Europe*, pp. 226 – 227.

<sup>508</sup> It is the extraordinary richness of Damian's letters that allows us to trace this development.

<sup>509</sup> For several examples of former queens meeting sometimes very brutal ends, see P. Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1983), pp. 187 – 188.

practices. She did not retreat from politics completely in 1062, but continued to intervene in matters concerning ecclesiastical property, and made some appearances at court. Only after Henry attained his majority in 1065 did she remove herself to Italy. She took up a stricter ascetic regime and sojourned at the monastery of Fruttuaria: a house that Damian had previously asked Adelaide of Turin to protect.<sup>510</sup> Since 1055 Henry IV had been betrothed to Adelaide's daughter, and they would marry in 1066. This mutual link with Fruttuaria, which the empress also favoured with new lands, probably bound the families further, and this is an example of how Agnes could continue to pursue family politics once she had left Germany. Ultimately, still in 1065, Agnes came to Rome. It was here that Damian met the empress, and began the more intensive period of their interaction, attested by the five letters sent between 1065 and 1067. This meeting also marks the beginning of a dialogue between Damian and Agnes over the nature of her religious vocation. We have no letters from Agnes addressed to Damian, but his vision for her spiritual career can be compared with the trajectory that this career ultimately took, and how it was observed and contested by others in Italy at the time.

The first of this series of letters, Letter 104, is by far the longest, and makes fulsome praise of Agnes's apparent turn to an ascetic life. Blum has suggested that Letter 104 was intended to be widely publicised, as an example of great and commendable humility on the part of one of the secular world's most prominent figures.<sup>511</sup> In one of the eleventh-century Monte Cassino manuscripts (C1), the text sports a superscript that would seem to support this: "Here is set out an exemplar of sacred conversion to be

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<sup>510</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 120 – 126.

<sup>511</sup> Blum 5, p. 145.

imitated by all.”<sup>512</sup> Whilst such headings may not have been the work of Damian’s hand, the text itself seems to confirm Damian’s hopes for Agnes:

...because however many princes and potentates of the world are converted to God through your example, for all these, it will amass for you the reward of eternal glory.<sup>513</sup>

It is also clear Damian saw his letter as having a key role in publicising Agnes’s exemplary widowhood:

But I relate these things not for you, venerable empress, as I am very fearful that you will rather be offended, and especially, by these words, but rather so that whenever the honour of your virtue is brought forth, no small edification may be procured by those reading...What swelling of any arrogant mind will not be blown out, when it sees a ruler of such glory now as a despicable slave? Who will fear a lack of transitory possessions, moreover, when they see the voluntary poverty in a woman, who, a little before, they had seen ruling so many kingdoms?<sup>514</sup>

Such sentiments are often found in Damian’s public recollections of his own hermits at Fonte Avellana – for whom Damian claimed to act as an unwilling spokesman, and with

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<sup>512</sup> “Hic omnibus imitandum proponitur sanctae conversionis exemplum.” Reindel 3, p. 141.

<sup>513</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, p. 152; “quia quotquot mundi principes ac potentes ad Deum per tuum convertentur exemplum, pro his omnibus aeternae gloriae tibi cumulabitur praemium.” Reindel 3, pp. 147 – 148.

<sup>514</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, p. 153; “Haec autem non propter te, venerabilis imperatrix, edissero, quam et his verbis pocius offendere pertimesco, sed ob id pocius, ut dum tuae virtutis insigne utcunque depromitur, non parva legentibus aedificacio procuretur...Quae tumidae cuiuslibet mentis inflacio praesto non folleat, cum tantae gloriae principem nunc velut despicabile mancipium cernat? Quis praeterea rerum transeuncium pertimescat inopiam, cum spontaneam videat in ea muliere pauperiem, quam tot utique regnis paulo ante conspexerat imperantem?” Reindel 3, p. 149.

whom, despite their idiosyncratic and individualist religious practices, he shared a hierarchical and governmental relationship. From a comment made in a letter to the empress written after she had returned to the German court (144, 1067), we might be led to believe that Agnes had indeed become a leading ascetic figure (or, rather, figurehead) in Italy:

Indeed, in your absence Rome well deserves your return, the church of blessed Peter mourns, and all through Italy holy men and women lament.<sup>515</sup>

Although, it must be said, in such letters Damian was often given to writing in a style that, to today's readers, smacks of hyperbole. It is perhaps surprising that Letter 104, given the pretensions to the status of 'exemplar' in the superscript, survives only in C1 and V5, John of Lodi's *Collectanea*.<sup>516</sup> Perhaps Agnes did attract a good deal of attention when practicing a religious life in Rome, as Letter 144 suggests. But, judging from the narrow distribution of these letters, it does not seem to have had a lasting impact on her renown as a holy woman. Contemporary writers, to be sure, often discussed Agnes using a heavily monastic vocabulary, but they did not necessarily follow Damian's particular vision. Her religious life had, as we shall see, quickly (in less than two years) led her back to the German court. This may have rendered the intensely ascetic image of Agnes that Damian elaborated in 1065 untenable. In contrast, the chroniclers Lambert of Hersfeld and Berthold of Reichenau both emphasise her holiness, but in ways that incorporate her active side. The pro-papal Berthold praised

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<sup>515</sup> Adapted from Blum 6, p. 148; "In vestri plane recessus absencia meret Roma, beati Petri luget aecclesia, et tota per sanctos viros ac mulieres lamentatur Italia." Reindel 3, p. 526.

<sup>516</sup> In the *Collectanea*, of course, only segments appear. And, as U1 and V1 have lost folios, there remains a slim possibility that The same is true of Letter 124 – see below.



her ascetic feats,<sup>517</sup> but his account of her 1074 journey from Rome to Swabia, “with the purpose of correcting the king’s morals”, is recounted with the author’s approval. The empress arrived with two papal legates and received promises from the king and, moreover, his advisors, that they would stop abusing church property, and returned Rome. Berthold held the advisors to be guilty, and Agnes’s considered purposes necessary. The next year these advisors, apparently repeat offenders, were excommunicated.<sup>518</sup> This kind of direct influence in royal matters (however short-lived the results), finds no place in the image of Agnes put forward in Letter 104. Nor did such activities, as we shall see below, receive Damian’s support.

The presence of Letter 104, as well as letters 124 and 144, in the Monte Cassino manuscripts may reflect the empress’s own interests in the monastery. Her involvement there reminds us that the nature of her post-regency role remained contested not only between herself and Damian, but also with the other religious groups that she came into contact with in Italy. She stayed at the monastery between September/October 1072 and March/April 1073 – potentially at the same time that Damian’s letters and sermons were being copied by Cassinese scribes sent to Fonte Avellana.<sup>519</sup> Leo of Ostia (d. c. 1115) recorded her generosity in the *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis* (c. 1075):

And it doesn’t seem appropriate to be silent on the religious devotion of the Empress Agnes too, who, like another Queen of Sheba, being drawn by the great desire of seeing another Solomon, of seeing another temple,<sup>520</sup> came

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<sup>517</sup> See the Chapter below, p. 209. Cf. Berthold’s eulogy in Robinson *Eleventh-Century Germany* p. 193.

<sup>518</sup> Robinson, *Eleventh-Century Germany*, pp. 131, 133. Cf. Sansterre ‘Mère du Roi’.

<sup>519</sup> Francis Newton dates *Montecassino, Biblioteca dell'Abbazia, Cod. 358 and 359* to c. 1072, suggesting that they were copied soon after Damian’s death in February 1072 see Newton, *Monte Cassino*, pp. 376 – 377; Bannister, ‘A Monastic Ark Against the Current Flood’, pp. 221 – 240.

<sup>520</sup> cf. III Kings 10:1 – 7.

hither from the most distant territories of Germany, and staying for the space of about half a year here she rejoiced to see many greater things about this place than she had heard, in things spiritual as well as temporal, and asserted, considering the place and the father and the brothers, that deservedly these had to be held as most celebrated through all the world by the men of their order. Moreover, she brought before the blessed Benedict what was proper in accordance with her august dignity, magnificent gifts, that is to say a many-coloured chasuble, woven entirely with gold; an alb decently adorned at the shoulders and head, and cuffs, at the feet, indeed, the selvedge having a measure nearly a cubit all around, and at the same a mantle with embroidery; two purple copes ornamented with precious gold edges, and besides these a great pallium with elephants, which they call a *dorsel*; a Gospel with a board cast from silver with work in relief and gilded most beautifully; two candelabra, likewise cast, of 12 lb in weight.<sup>521</sup>

Damian had also compared Agnes's arrival in Rome with that of the Queen of Sheba at Jerusalem at the start of Letter 104,<sup>522</sup> suggesting perhaps that Leo had read the letter in the Monte Cassino library. But the comparison highlights a key difference: Letter 104

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<sup>521</sup> "Nec imperatricis quoque Agnetis dignum videtur religiosam tacere devotionem, que velut altera regina Saba Salomonis alterius et alterius templi magno videndi desiderio ducta ex ultimis huc Germanie finibus adventavit ac per medium ferme istic anni spatium commorans multo maiora de his, que super hoc loco auditu perceperat, tam secundum Deum quam secundum seculum se videre gaudebat et asserebat merito censens et locum et patrem et fratres per totum orbem sui ordinis hominibus celebriores habendos. Optulit autem beato Benedicto, prout augustalem dignitatem decebat, dona magnifica, idest planetam diaspram totam undique auro contextam; albam a scapulis et capite ac manibus friso decenter ornatam, a pedibus vero frisea nichilominus lista mensuram ferme cubiti in latitudine habens circumdatam simulque et amictum cum brusto; pluviales duos purpureos pretiosis aureis listis ornatos α nec non et pallium magnum cum elefantis, quod dorsale cognominant; evangelium cum tabula fusili de argento opere anaglifto et pulcherrime deaurato; duo quoque candelabra argentea eque fusilia pondo librarum XII." H. Hoffmann (ed.), *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis* in *MGH SS XXXIV*, III, ch. 31, pp. 402 – 403. See also Newton *Monte Cassino* pp. 233 – 240 and H. E. J. Cowdrey, *The Age of Abbot Desiderius: Monte Cassino, the Papacy, and the Normans in the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries* (Oxford, 1983), p. 34.

<sup>522</sup> Blum 5, pp. 145 – 146; Reindel pp. 141 – 142; cf. *Chronica Casinensis* p. 402.

had likened the empress to the Queen of Sheba only to draw attention to the differences between them:

And thus, O queen, you have recently come to this Solomon, not like the Queen of Sheba with chariots and horses and elephants, but rather with tears and sighs and lamentation...With humility you have come to him who was lowly, in poverty to him who was poor, and as if with the roughshod and unlettered crowds of shepherds, you have come to adore the child crying in the manger.<sup>523</sup>

No such contrast in Leo of Ostia's account, where Agnes's Sabaeen largesse is positively celebrated. Leo and Agnes were using a language of gifts that Damian could not countenance. The attitude towards the material gifts in the *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*, with its detailed record of beauty and value, is a world away from the curt, vague descriptions that Damian made of the gifts offered to him during his travels.<sup>524</sup> Agnes, giving "what was proper in accordance with her august dignity", does not seem to have been imbued with Damian's anxiety over pride during her time with him in Rome. Leo and Damian were both using a monastic vocabulary to talk about Agnes in their own terms, but the differences between their texts illustrate the distance between the ascetic ideal outlined in Letter 104, and the reality of Agnes's life.

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<sup>523</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, pp. 150 – 151; "Ad hunc ergo Salomonem tu nuper, o regina, venisti, non ut illa Sabeorum in curribus et equitibus et elephantis, sed in lacrimis potius, gemitibus ac lamentis...Venisti humilis ad humilem, pauper ad pauperem, et quasi cum peronatis et incultis gregum pastoribus adorare venisti puerum in praesepio vagientem." Reindel 3, pp. 146 – 147.

<sup>524</sup> See above, Chapter 3, pp. 172 – 185.

Agnes's *Modus Vivendi*:

As soon as she arrived in Rome, the attempts to negotiate a new identity for the empress proved a complex matter, and Damian avoided talking too explicitly about Agnes's material living arrangements. The manner of Agnes's residence in Rome is not clear at all, although we can make some suggestions. In a later letter, written to her sometime after 1072, John of Fécamp tells the empress that he has sent her some sermons "about the life and customs of virgins, to instruct the nuns who are gathered in your monastery."<sup>525</sup> Agnes may have stayed in the same house during her first visit to Rome, but in Damian's letters there is a distinct emphasis on Agnes's *solitudo*. Letters 124 and 130 (both 1065/1066) were written to comfort the empress in the solitude of her new life. Following her arrival in Rome, Agnes had been attended to by Bishop Rainaldus of Como, her sister-in-law Hermensinde (who had accompanied her to Rome), and Damian himself:

I believe, venerable lady, since Lord Rainaldus, bishop of the see of Como and the holy woman Hermensinde, widow of your brother, and I your servant, have each withdrawn to our own places, your mind is now restless, and, just as one put away from the comfort of all things, it deplores having been left alone with itself.<sup>526</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> "de vita et moribus virginum, ad instruendas sanctimoniales quae in tuo monasterio congregatae sunt." J. Leclercq and J. Bonnes (eds.) *Un Maître de la vie spirituelle au XIe siècle: Jean de Fécamp* (Paris, 1946), p.211-17.

<sup>526</sup> Letter 124, Adapted from Blum 6, p. 21; "Arbitror, venerabilis domina, quoniam ex quo domnus Rainaldus a Cumanae sedis episcopus et sancta mulier Hermisinda relictæ quondam germani tui, ego quoque servus tuus, ad propria quique recessimus, mens tua nunc fluctuat, et velut omnium destituta solacio solam se remansisse deplorat." Reindel 3, p. 408

And in Letter 130 there is another reference to her isolation, as Damian instructed her: “I urge you...for the love of the celestial bride, to endure solitude, and even a want of necessary expense.”<sup>527</sup> How far is this compatible with John of Fécamp’s idea that she had immediately entered the monastery? None of the letters before 1072 make any reference to her cohabiting with other nuns, and the letters that Damian wrote to encourage the empress talk often of her *solitudo*. Perhaps Agnes had taken up a secluded residence in a private property, or had special arrangements with a particular institution – arrangements befitting her status. After all, Damian never ceased to address Agnes as *Imperatrix*, and the exceptional nature of her Imperial status allowed her to stay with the monks at Monte Cassino for the better part of a year.

Solitude could be achieved, at least to a degree, within a monastery. We saw in the case of Teuzo, the confrontational hermit of the Florentine *Badia*, that ascetics in northern and central Italy at this time were nothing if not inventive in their approach to familiar eremitic themes of space and seclusion. There is also a parallel example in Letter 66, which Damian wrote to a Countess Blanca – otherwise unknown, but apparently residing in or near Milan – in 1060. Many of the themes in Letter 104 are also found in Letter 66, and these will be explored in more detail below. Just as in the correspondence with Agnes, there is little concerning Blanca’s convent, save for a brief comment regarding her separation from her old lands, and her new life in a monastery. Suggesting that Blanca is inebriated with the Holy Spirit, he wrote:

This drunkenness has without doubt made you hold your lands, ample with  
crops and fertile in abundant produce, in contempt, turn away from tower

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<sup>527</sup> Adapted from Blum 6, p. 53; “hortor...pro amore caelestis sponsi solitudinem vel etiam necessari sumptus inopiam sustinere.” Reindel 3, p. 435.

walls and castle ramparts, cast away the intimacy of sweet relations and the affection of domestic servants, and what is greatest of all these things, disown an only son whilst young and as yet a child, without the consolation of a marriage contract, and you, who had been accustomed to walk surrounded by crowded cohorts of followers, have now learned to live reside humbly in a corner of a monastery [*angulo monasterii*], with holy women poor in spirit.<sup>528</sup>

Though it is not much to go on, Damian's use of the word 'corner' (*angulus*) usually denotes a separated or more secluded area for ascetic activity and living, so it may be that the countess was living somewhat detached from the rest of her new community, perhaps as a reflection of her (former) status.<sup>529</sup> And however 'poor in spirit' Agnes may have been, she was never truly separated from her status, wealth and influence. As the pro-papal chronicler Berthold of Reichenau tellingly relates, "She impressed all her servants beyond measure by her long labours even during the night."<sup>530</sup> Her stay in Rome was surrounded by her lengthy sojourns at Fruttuaria and Monte Cassino, and her

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<sup>528</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, p. 42; "Haec te nimirum ebrietas impulit ampla satis atque uberrimis faecunda proventibus rura contempnere, munita turrium atque castrorum propugnacula declinare, dulcium propinquorum necessitudines ac vernaculorum affectus abicere, quodque horum omnium per maximum est, unicum filium eumque efebum adhuc atque inpuerem sine coniugalis solatio foederis abdicare, et quae constipatis vallata clientium cuneis solebas incedere, iam didicisti in angulo monasterii cum pauperibus spiritu sanctis mulieribus humiliter residere." Reindel 2, p. 251.

<sup>529</sup> See, for example, Letter 28, where *angulus* refers to Damian's eremitic cell (Reindel 1, p. 351), Letter 45, where it appears to be a reference to the hermit Teuzo's quasi-independent living arrangements in the Florentine Badia (Reindel 2, p. 36), and Letter 124 (Reindel 3, p. 408), where it describes the remote place that the Empress Agnes hoped to find. *Angulus* also appears in the *Liber Gomorrhianus* where it describes the area set aside for the prayers of sodomites and demoniacs (Reindel 1, p. 307): in this case separation from the rest of the community, save those deemed capable of dealing 'safely' with sodomites (notably the community elders), was of paramount concern. As this *angulus* was a space for prayer and spiritual recovery, I would not consider the association with sodomites in this case to have 'tainted' the meaning of the word in Damian's mind. For an interesting, literary-minded, Foucaudian analysis of this space, see W. Burgwinkle, 'Visible and Invisible Bodies and Subjects in Peter Damian' in E. Campbell and R. Mills (eds.), *Troubled Vision: Gender, Sexuality and Sight in Medieval Text and Image* (New York, 2004), pp. 47 – 62, at pp. 52 – 54.

<sup>530</sup> Robinson *Eleventh-Century Germany* p. 193. Berthold's eulogy to the Empress stresses her ascetic feats even beyond Damian's claims. cf. Sansterre 'Mère du Roi', p. 171.

travels back north of the Alps. She was politically engaging with the religious institutions of northern and central Italy, but it is unlikely that she planned a radical change of direction towards engaging in extreme forms of asceticism. That impression is Damian's imposition. So how far was this new representation of the empress a gendered one, and what were its implications?

Agnes and Blanca: *Sponsae Christi*:

The rarity of Damian's Letter 104 in the manuscripts may be down to the tastes and needs of later copyists, but the fact that it deals primarily with a woman's spirituality does not seem to have been the cause of its unpopularity. The letter to Countess Blanca (number 66) did not suffer the same obscurity in the surviving manuscripts. There are such marked similarities between Blanca's life story and that of Agnes – particularly leaving her only son on the death of her husband to enter the religious life – that there have been suggestions that Blanca is in fact a pseudonym for Agnes.<sup>531</sup> But Letter 66 mentions Damian's fellow hermit Dominic Loricatus, who died in 1060, as still being alive. This would mean the letter was written whilst Agnes was still ruling the Empire as regent, before she lost her powers in 1062, and given the ascetic content, the idea that it was a pseudonym seems very unlikely. Damian cites this letter, mentioning Blanca's name, in letters 92, 93 and 109, making it similarly unlikely that Blanca was fictional.

Letter 66 was copied into five of the significant eleventh-century manuscripts, at Fonte Avellana and Monte Cassino, and was copied into 72 manuscripts in all, making it one

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<sup>531</sup> cf. Blum 3, p. 40, n. 2.

of the most widely disseminated of all Damian's letters.<sup>532</sup> Such extensive circulation suggests that the intended audience was broader than the address line indicates, and we should not assume that the letter was solely aimed at women (likewise with Letter 104). The institutional nature of the monastic means of textual production and distribution would preclude the possibility, and in any case both letters contain much that would have been relevant to both men and women. This is reflected in the preservation of Letter 66: from the twelfth century onwards an excerpt from the letter, concerning the fears of the soul as it leaves the body of the dying, was circulating separately from the full text,<sup>533</sup> with no mark of its origin, nor any hint of gender specificity.

A common refrain in these letters, relevant to rulers regardless of their gender, is the worthlessness of earthly things and temporal power, and the dread of judgement day. Similar warnings appear in these letters and those that he addressed to men in positions of secular and ecclesiastical power.<sup>534</sup> The end of the world is discussed at length in Letter 66, and in Letter 104 Damian demonstrated the true, illusory, value of secular supremacy through many examples from Classical Roman history – possibly using Eutropius's fourth-century *Breviarium* as his source material – illustrating the sticky ends met by many an emperor.<sup>535</sup>

Nevertheless, Letter 104 includes a gendered dimension to this common theme. Lest women be thought immune, he also recounts the tale of Cleopatra, "magnificent ruler of all Egypt", defeated and reduced to suicide. This is told side-by-side with the example

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<sup>532</sup> It can be found in C1, V1, U1, V5 and *Vat. Chig.A.VIII.218*.

<sup>533</sup> The earliest (twelfth-century) example is *Leipzig Karl-Marx-Uni. Cod. 260*. In total, 26 of the 72 manuscripts contain only this section.

<sup>534</sup> He returned to this theme in his later letters to Agnes, and Letter 130 is a good example of this warning that "he who today is clothed in purple, is tomorrow put into the grave." See Blum 6, p. 54.

<sup>535</sup> The *Breviarium* was a compendium of Roman History, dedicated to the Emperor Valens. See Blum 5, pp. 157 – 159, n. 63 – 69.



of Semiramis, Queen of Assyria. Damian recorded her reign almost as an afterthought, though his off-hand manner rather conceals the richness of the reference:

Semiramis, too, how much slaughter she caused, and how many kingdoms she subdued after the death of her husband, and how she finally died, all of this the ancient annals relate.<sup>536</sup>

The account of her reign can be found in fourth-century historian Justin's *Epitome Historiarum Philippicarum* (abridged from an earlier work by Pompeius Trogus). After the death of her husband Semiramis, like Agnes, found her son too young to rule, and so assumed the role of regent. Unlike Agnes, Semiramis did so by disguising herself as her son "as so many great nations would scarcely submit to one man, much less to a woman". In this guise she achieved many great feats, expanding her empire and building Babylon (Damian's purpose here, after all, is to examine the fate of those successful in their worldly ambitions). After ruling thus for 42 years, she is ultimately murdered by her son, who then finally takes control.

It is hard to determine how much Damian might have expected Agnes to understand from this reference, whether he thought her familiar with the tale or hoped to point her towards it. Semiramis was also cited in the work of the lexicographer Papias, an Italian contemporary to Damian, possibly from Lombardy, though the details of his life are sketchy. The *Epitome Historiarum Philippicarum*, which in any case was widely known, looks to have been circulating in the scholarly circles that Damian had moved in during the 1030s. But whilst in his letters to the margraves of Tuscany Damian tended

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<sup>536</sup> Blum 5, p. 159; "Semiramis eciam post obitum viri, quot strages dederit, quot sibi regna subdiderit, quo demum fine defecerit, liquido veterum testantur annales." Reindel 3, p. 155.

to spell out the significance of the examples he was presenting, with this letter to Agnes he appears to have expected a little more from his reader(s).<sup>537</sup>

Ideas of gender, and particularly gender reversal, are central to the story of Semiramis, which in its original form appears to have been an attempt to provide an origin myth for the enduring trope of the ‘effeminate Orient’.<sup>538</sup> The author of the history, Justin, is not in fact disparaging about her ability to rule, though the exceptional nature of the situation is crucial to this representation:

The stature of both mother and son was low, their voice alike weak, and the cast of their features similar. She accordingly clad her arms and legs in long garments, and decked her head with a turban; and, that she might not appear to conceal any thing by this new dress, she ordered her subjects also to wear the same apparel; a fashion which the whole nation has since retained. Having thus dissembled her sex at the commencement of her reign, she was believed to be a male. She afterwards performed many noble actions; and when she thought envy was overcome by the greatness of them, she acknowledged who she was, and whom she had personated. Nor did this confession detract from her authority as a sovereign, but increased the

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<sup>537</sup> Jaeger notes that Agnes brought quite a refined and, so far as her contemporaries in the German cathedral schools were concerned, effeminate courtly culture with her from Aquitaine. She herself appears to have been highly educated. Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, pp. 199 – 202.

<sup>538</sup> By the time Samiramis’s son does eventually take power, the effects of his mother’s actions seem to have ingrained themselves on the dynasty: “Her son Ninyas, content with the empire acquired by his parents, laid aside the pursuits of war, and, as if he had changed sexes with his mother, was seldom seen by men, but grew old in the company of his women. His successors too, following his example, gave answers to their people through their ministers. The Assyrians, who were afterwards called Syrians, held their empire thirteen hundred years. The last king that reigned over them was Sardanapalus, a man more effeminate than a woman.” Iustinus *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* trans. J. Watson (London, 1853) 2:11 – 3:1.

admiration of her, since she, being a woman, surpassed, not only women, but men, in heroism.<sup>539</sup>

In Justin's account of the Assyrian queen's undoing, there is an implication that her role reversals, or perhaps simply the general unusualness of the Assyrian court, ultimately led to her demise as "conceiving a criminal passion for her son, she was killed by him, after holding the kingdom two and forty years from the death of Ninus".<sup>540</sup> These tales do, primarily, serve to extend Damian's from-purple-to-worm-food motif to women, with the added twist, in this latter case, of incest. But is there any further significance to his choice of Cleopatra and Samiramis? The lasting feminising effects of Samiramis's rule on the Assyrian dynasty make the *Epitome* ultimately a normative text in terms of female/male rulership. Damian's coupling of Cleopatra and Samiramis as examples (and they are the only two female examples) are also linked by the fact that both were queens ruling despite the existence of legitimate male heirs – Samiramis clearly continued her rule long after her son's coming-of-age, and Cleopatra ousted her younger brother Ptolemy XIII, and ruled over the head of Ptolemy XIV. Damian may have been saying in an indirect way (and in a way whereby he may have hoped to flatter her reading and intellect) to Agnes: do not meddle in your son's rule once he is of age.<sup>541</sup> He certainly said the same to Blanca more explicitly, as we shall see below. The tact that Damian shows in expressing this sentiment to the empress contrasts with the openly disrespectful language he used in the letters during her regency, but then her arrival in

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<sup>539</sup> Iustinus *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* 2:2 – 2:6.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid, 2:10.

<sup>541</sup> He also alludes to her separation from Henry in Letter 130, written to Agnes whilst she was still in Rome, as he quotes the Book of Samuel 1:8 (putting the words into the mouth of the heavenly bridegroom) "why do you weep, and why do you not eat, and why is your heart afflicted? Am I not better for you than ten children?" Blum 6, p. 25.

Rome created a whole new context, and whole new opportunities, for Damian's writings.

In these letters to Agnes and Blanca, Damian also used a more 'feminised' vocabulary to discuss their spirituality. When writing to men, Damian derived a great deal of his imagery from war and idea of the 'soldier of Christ'.<sup>542</sup> This Pauline concept was used to particular effect when Damian addressed men wavering in their religious vocation, and he exercised the gendering potential of the image, as here in Letter 10, where Damian berated a monk for not abandoning wine:

Why has degenerate terror seized the soul of a warrior of Christ? Has the taste of wine, with womanly caressing, held back the hardy knight within walls of his house, and not permitted him, already wearing a helmet, already girded with arms, already inspired to great things, to go out to battle?<sup>543</sup>

But in letters 66 and 104 he turns instead to the newly-wedded bliss of the Song of Songs: Agnes and Blanca are not warriors, but 'brides of Christ'. Of the letters in our present study, four make direct reference to the Song of Songs, and Damian also refers to the Empress Agnes as the 'bride of Christ' in a letter to his nephew and namesake Damianus (123, 1065).<sup>544</sup> Perhaps the *miles Christi* who waged war on carnal desires was more relevant in a masculine context, but it must be conceded that these divisions

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<sup>542</sup> There are good examples in letters 1, 10 and 27. St. Paul uses the image of the soldier in his epistles. See in particular 2 Tim 2:2-4: "Labour as a good soldier of Christ Jesus [*miles Christi Jesu*]. No man, being a soldier to God, entangleth himself with secular businesses: that he may please him to whom he hath engaged himself." See also Phil 2:25, Phlm 1:2.

<sup>543</sup> Adapted from Blum 1, p. 113; "Cur animum bellatoris Christi terror degener occupavit? Numquid vini sapor, muliebri blandicia rigidum militem intra domus claustra retinuit, et iam galeatum, iam armis accinctum, iam magna spirantem, exire ad proelium non permisit?" Reindel 1, p. 128.

<sup>544</sup> Reindel 3, p. 401. This letter, incidentally, shows that stories *about* women were not only *for* women.

were not absolute – Damian did, though only very occasionally, make use of military metaphor in his letters to women, and, like many writers of the eleventh century, he used the Song of Songs, and the ‘bride of Christ’ to explain more than a holy woman’s union with the heavenly spouse. As early as Origen Adamantius, theologians had used the Song of Songs to understand the Church as Christ’s bride,<sup>545</sup> and this would oft be used in the literature of eleventh-century reformers, amongst whom the idea of the bishop as the faithful bridegroom of his church also became popular.<sup>546</sup> There are three letters that make extensive use of Songs without reference to female spirituality: Letters 28 (the ‘Book of ‘the Lord be with You’’, 1048 – 1053), 86 (to Abbot Desiderius of Monte Cassino, 1061) and 165 (to the hermit Albizo, 1065). In Letter 28 the hermit’s cell is likened to the bridal chamber, where the soul is united with Christ.<sup>547</sup> Letter 86 is an unusual collection of Damian’s ideas about the symbolism of various animals, and Songs provides a diverse range of metaphors. Letter 165 sees the soul once again as the bride in the celestial matrimony. Aside from these specific references to the Song of Songs, in Letter 154 (to Godfrey, margrave of Tuscany, 1068) he presents the Church as the *sponsa Christi*, which the margrave was in danger of raping through his contact with Cadalus of Parma.

In Letters 28 and 158, the image of the *sponsa Christi*, was extended to represent the soul of the ascetic of either gender. In these cases it had more to do with Damian’s broader eremitic theology, whereby the true purpose of the spiritual life, i.e. the

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<sup>545</sup> This was the most common understanding of the Song of Songs, see E. Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1992) pp. 86 – 123. See also R. Gregory, *Marrying Jesus: Brides and the Bridegroom in Medieval Women’s Religious Literature* (Unpublished PhD. Thesis, University of North Carolina, 2007), pp. 11 – 12; There has also been the suggestion that commentary on the Song of Songs was a site for the ambiguous and transgressive nature of monastic sexuality and desire to be played out. Although this is not so relevant in the case of Agnes and Blanca, See S. Moore, ‘The Song of Songs in the History of Sexuality’ *Church History* 69 (2000), pp. 328 – 349.

<sup>546</sup> McLaughlin *Sex, Gender and Episcopal Authority* pp. 51 – 56.

<sup>547</sup> The image of the soul as bride also has a long history, Matter *The Voice* pp. 123 – 150.

contemplation of God, was attained through separation from ‘the world’ (represented by the seclusion of the heavenly marriage chamber). In championing the asceticism of solitude, Damian’s letters to religious women do not cohere with what Schulenburg termed the “domesticized/privatized saintly ideal for women”.<sup>548</sup> The scholarship on medieval queenship has long recognised that the public/private binary does not adequately represent the nature of medieval political power.<sup>549</sup> Women’s presence in the ‘domestic’ in this context was not merely a claustration, but gave them a pivotal role in the complex world of the medieval political household. Even the most ‘private’ of spaces and relationships – like the royal or comital bedchamber – had great ramifications in the public political world. It is in this light that we should read Damian’s attempts to separate Agnes and Blanca from their familial ties. The idea of celestial marriage evidently joined with a broad net of connotations regarding the ascetic’s relationship with God, but there a further significance for these widows as, just as we saw with the concept of ‘Mother Church’, it allowed Damian tangentially, yet consciously, to undermine their roots in familial power. Letter 66 contains many references to Blanca’s new celestial marriage. What concerns Damian more is the countess’ family – specifically the son that, like Agnes, she left behind. He conceives this divine marriage as being incompatible with her earthly familial duties. Fearful of things which might lead her back to the world, Damian warns that the devil would seek to use her family ties against her:

That ancient seducer, who through the serpent formerly puked his cunning  
venom into Eve, will also hiss to you through another vessel of his, as if

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<sup>548</sup> J. Schulenburg, ‘Female Sanctity: Public and Private Roles, c. 500 – 1100’ in M. Erler and M. Kowaleski (eds.) *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (London, 1988) p. 118.

<sup>549</sup> See, with further references, J. Parsons ‘Family, Sex, and Power: the Rhythms of Medieval Queenship’ in J. Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship* (Stroud, 1994), pp. 1 – 13, at pp. 9 – 10.

defending the caprice of a daughter: “Return home,” he says, “under the customs of the sacred profession, lead your family, explain the way of pious living, maintain a weighty and modest discipline over your son and those of his age, seek out a wife for the stumbling son in accordance with the law, and do not permit him to retreat to an obsequious client [*clientela*].” Therefore the spirit, fabricating these villainies, doesn’t care though which cloak he might draw you back to the world, trusting that through secular deeds, he rules in your mind.<sup>550</sup>

Christ, it seems, cannot be a step-father, and the countess could not afford to integrate her celestial husband into her existing family. The family, apparently the acceptable sphere of influence for women, frames her holiness, but it is not the source of it – quite the opposite in fact. Damian hints too at the politics of Agnes’s decision to enter the religious life, although he appears to leave much unsaid, given the pressures on the empress – far greater than those on a countess – to maintain the stability of the Empire and the continuity of succession. Even so, he wrote that Agnes’s choice was hardly a choice at all:

My queen, you have lost your husband, and after his death declined marrying again or being engaged to any other suitor, unless he was superior in dignity to the exalted status of your former husband. What, therefore, were you to do? Your husband had been the emperor, he was at the very

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<sup>550</sup> Adapted from Blum 3, pp. 57 – 58; “Antiquus enim ille seductor, qui dudum Evae per serpentem versutiae suae virus invomuit, adhuc fortassis et tibi tam quam filiae morem servans, per aliud suum vasculum sibilabit: Revertere, inquiens, domum sub ipso sacrae professionis habitu, rege familiam, expone pie vivendi formam, tene super filium eiusque coevos gravitatis ac modestiae disciplinam, provide lapsuro non absonam legibus sponsam, nec resilire permittas sibimet obsequentium clientelam. Haec igitur fabricans nequitiae spiritus non curat, qua te ad saeculum retrahat veste, dummodo confidat, quod per saeculares actus tibi principetur in mente.” Reindel 2, pp. 266 – 267.

peak of royal power, and what was unique in human experience, he ruled as monarch of the Roman world. And so, since he was so preeminent because of his exalted position, you could find no one in the world who was superior to him. And since nowhere on earth could you find a suitable husband, one who appealed to you, you violently rushed to embrace the Spouse of heaven.<sup>551</sup>

Whilst Damian was not very original in his uses of the Song of Songs, these passages show that when he applied the allegory to real, contemporary women, he confronted the particular, gendered problems facing widows. In this regard Agnes's position as dowager empress was specially unique, as earthly remarriage would have raised all kinds of knotty political issues. His comments on these new 'marriages' contrast with those of Adelaide and Beatrice that we saw in Chapter 2, where Damian accepted their second (or third) earthly unions almost without comment. Being the bride of Christ was a far less accommodating proposition, at least in terms of the widow's relationship with her children. The stringent separation of the heavenly bride from her former family concerns also differs from the experience of those further down the social ladder, like the widow and children of Rodulf senior, seen in Chapter 3, who appear to have remained a coherent family unit despite their entry into the religious life.

This new celestial union brought its own theological baggage, and Damian touches briefly upon it with the subject of virginity. Given that he writes only to cloistered

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<sup>551</sup> Blum 5, p. 152; "Amisisti, regina, virum, post quem dedignata es thalamos iterare, vel proci cuiuslibet foedus admittere, nisi qui priorem virum excellencioris gloriae dignitate transcenderet. Quid igitur faceres? Vir ille tuus imperator extitit, regiae dignitatis apicem tenuit, et quod in hominibus singulare est, Romani imperii monarchiam dispensavit. Quia igitur in tantae celsitudinis arce praeeminuit, eo superior quispiam in humano genere reperiri non potuit. Quae ergo in terris idoneum et, qui tuis placeret oculis, invenire non poteris virum, in caelestis sponsi provolasti violenter amplexus." Reindel 3, p. 148.



widows with children, he mentions virginity relatively rarely in these letters, but it is a problem that he addressed elsewhere, notably in his theological treatise *De Divina Omnipotentia*. In that letter (119), written to Abbot Desiderius of Monte Cassino in 1065 (that is, around the time the empress came to Rome) Damian had disputed St. Jerome's idea that God could not restore the 'crown of virginity' to one who had lost it. The text uses this example to explore the philosophical and theological ramifications of God's infinite power in relation to time, and the insufficiency of human reason for understanding it. Damian concluded that God exists beyond time, and so can make what has been not have been – that is, not only can He remove the shame and physical effects, but He can make it not have happened: Damian commented at length on the grammatical implications. It is an interesting 'site' for the power of God to be questioned.<sup>552</sup> Writing to Agnes, Damian was careful in his language, but emphasised the restorative properties of celestial marriage:

A man of the flesh, indeed, destroys the sacred secrets of virginity, whilst the spouse of heaven, even when joined with those who have been violated, then without difficulty restores to virginal honour.<sup>553</sup>

Damian suggests the same in his letter to Countess Blanche:

And "since anyone who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him," [1 Cor 6:17] this bridegroom is not only joined to his bride, but united with her.

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<sup>552</sup> Irven Resnick has argued that Damian's real purpose was to challenge those who questioned the virgin birth – i.e. those questioning doctrine, i.e. heretics, which would make the letter a pastoral piece. But it is important to keep its relevance to his actual thoughts on virginity in mind. See Resnick 'Peter Damian on the Restoration of Virginity', pp. 125 – 134.

<sup>553</sup> Adapted from Blum 5, p. 152; "Carnalis plane vir virginitatis archana corrumpit, sponsus autem ille caelestis eas etiam quas sibi violatas adsociat, in virginal decus ilico sine difficultate reformat" Reindel 3, p. 148.

This union does not beget corruption, but rather restores the integrity of virginity.<sup>554</sup>

*Virginale decus* and *integritas* are not quite the same as *virginitas*. Nevertheless, virginity remained an important consideration – one that needed an explanation – in the feminised version of ascetic life that Damian encouraged for these wealthy widows. We have seen elsewhere, in Damian’s letters to the Countess of Tuscany for example, that he saw some forms of religious moral practice (such as taking vows of chastity) as suitable for noble women living in the world. There are other, more extreme examples, as in Letter 66: after recounting the feats (not for the last time) of fellow hermit Dominic Loricatus, Damian adds:

Thus, by the example of this old man in taking the discipline, the custom spread in our area, so that not only men but even noble women eagerly took up this form of purgatory. For the widow of Tethbaldus<sup>555</sup> a woman of noble birth and high dignity, once told me that by taking the discipline according to a predetermined norm, she had satisfied 100 years of penance.<sup>556</sup>

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<sup>554</sup> Blum 3, p. 41; “Et quoniam, qui adheret Domino, unus spiritus est, sponsus iste non modo sponsae iungitur, sed unitur, atque ex hac copula non corruptio nascitur, sed integritatis potius clausula reparatur.” Reindel 2, p. 249.

<sup>555</sup> Reindel notes that Tethbald and his wife appear in Donizo’s *Vita Mathildis*, ed. L. Bethmann, *MGH SS* vol. 12 (Berlin, 1856) p. 361. There we learn that her name was Guilla (not to be confused with Guilla, wife of Rainer). One of their sons became Bishop of Arezzo. See Reindel 2, p. 276.

<sup>556</sup> Blum 3, p. 66; “Huius itaque sancti senis exemplo faciendae disciplinae mos adeo in nostris partibus inolevit, ut non modo viri sed et nobiles mulieres hoc purgatorii genus inhianter arriperent. Nam et relicta Tethbaldi, sublimis utique generis et non infimae dignitatis, mihi ali quando retulit, per praefixam huius disciplinae regulam centum annorum se paenitentiam peregrisse.” Reindel 2, p. 276.

By ‘discipline’ Damian meant self-flagellation – and this for apparently uncloistered women of rank!<sup>557</sup> By introducing the language of virginity and, moreover, ‘corruption’ alongside these ascetic practices, Damian emphasised the impurity of worldly associations. It was necessary for Blanca and Agnes, in their new state, to protect themselves spiritually and bodily. These letters are typical of Damian in so far as they are rich pieces intended for a broad audience. Nevertheless there is a feminised version of asceticism being put forward here, no less stringent than in his letters to men, by laying emphasis on separation from family and from power. This was, of course, relevant to ascetic men also, but the rhetoric of celestial marriage in this context aims specifically at prioritising these women’s spiritual life over and above their role as mothers. Whilst there is a world of difference, then, between the language Damian employed in the letters about Agnes during the regency, and the language used in letters to her from 1065 onwards, there is a common thread of eroding her bonds of earthly motherhood and ushering her away from the power over her son.

#### An Active Widow:

From letters 144 and 149, it is clear that Damian’s hope that Agnes would become a shining example of eremitic-ascetic fervour was quite quickly stretched to breaking point. In 1067 she went to the royal court of her son on Alexander II’s request to ask for assistance against the Normans. In these letters Damian begged for her return to Rome.

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<sup>557</sup> This is perhaps surprising, judging, from the lukewarm reception of his defence of flagellation in certain quarters. See Letter 45. That he means flagellation is demonstrated by the story that preceeds this passage, in which Dominic beat himself whilst reciting the psalter. Incidentally Letter 66 also sees Damian return, for one of the only instances outside the *The Book of Gomorrah*, to the subject of homosexual acts, as he tells of a former hermit of his who “fell somehow to wasting his *fluxus* through the thighs with another monk”. “cum alio quodam monacho...per femoralis fluxus egestionem cecidit” Reindel 2, p. 267. That this appears in such a well copied letter provides further evidence (if it be needed) against Boswell’s suggestion that Alexander II tried to cover up the scandal of sodomy by confiscating *The Book of Gomorrah*: the text simply wasn’t that unique.

Just as with Letter 104, manuscript copies of these two letters are rare. They do appear, along with Letter 124, in a late twelfth-century manuscript *Chig.A.V.145*,<sup>558</sup> now in the Vatican library. The copyist or his client seem to have had a particular interest in Agnes. Three of the sixteen letters in the collection are addressed to Agnes, another three to lay magnates, like Dukes Godfrey and Rainer, but only those addressed to Agnes have been illuminated (if with fairly modest capitals). Even in the letter to Damianus that mentions the empress (123) there has been a space left to illuminate the first letter of the relevant passage, though the work was never completed. Whatever the purpose of the manuscript, its contents do not match any of the extant early collections from Fonte Avellana. Letter 149 appears in only this manuscript, which would suggest that copies of the letters, some now lost, were kept at Fonte Avellana for at least a century.<sup>559</sup> Why it wasn't copied into the great collections (C1, V1, U1) is hard to say, as Damian's association with such a prominent pro-papal figure would surely have its benefits for Fonte Avellana.

We have seen how in Letter 144 (1067) Damian berated Agnes for bringing 'sorrow to holy men and women in all of Italy' by her absence, and Letter 149 (1067) follows a similar course. Damian explicitly warns the empress of the dangers of returning to 'the world' via her former haunts in the royal court. In doing so, he also exposed the acute difficulty of fitting the empress's life into his particular ideals of eremitic asceticism. In letter 149 he returns to an oft used rhetorical pattern, focusing of the polarisation of the 'city' (sinful, corrupt and worldly), and the 'desert' (remote, otherworldly, and a place of trial and contemplation). Taking his imagery from Jeremiah 21:8-9, he explains to the absent Agnes:

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<sup>558</sup> 140 x 215mm, 35 folios in all.

<sup>559</sup> Again, this raises the question of how many letters were lost.

We must, therefore, flee to the camp of the enemy [the Chaldeans, here taken to be the apostles] lest we be forced to perish in the city, so that each one of us might uproot from our heart all hankering for this world, and arrive at the right that accompany our surrender to the apostles.<sup>560</sup>

And he continues:

But if it is dangerous to remain in the city, how much more disastrous is it to return to the city walls you once deserted? Do you understand what I am saying?<sup>561</sup>

Damian is asking Agnes to flee this ‘city’ (by which he means the royal court), and return to what in Letter 144 he called “Rome, capital of the world.”<sup>562</sup> Damian was quite capable of bypassing the first order of meaning and moving straight to the second order when interpreting biblical passages in his letters, and so could indeed tell Agnes, quite without irony, to flee the city for the seclusion of Rome. Comparing these letters to that which he wrote to the Florentine hermit Teuzo however,<sup>563</sup> where the same arguments are taken as literal, and simply factual statements of Damian’s attitudes towards asceticism and urban space, and it seems that, again, his categorical definitions of ‘the world’ and how to live apart from it are actually remarkably malleable.

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<sup>560</sup> Blum 3, p. 175; *Debemus ergo ad hostium castra transfugere, ne compellamur in urbe perire, ut unusquisque nostrum ab huius mundi desiderio radicem cordis evellat, et in apostolicae deditionis iura deveniat.* Reindel 3, p. 550.

<sup>561</sup> Blum 3, p. 176; *“Quod si noxium est in urbe manere, quanto perniciosius est moenia iam deserta repetere? Intelligis ipsa que dico?”* Reindel 3, p. 550.

<sup>562</sup> “caput mundi Roma” Reindel 3, p. 526.

<sup>563</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 71 – 87.

For all Damian's attempts to control the empress – or rather the image of the empress – the agency of others, not least Agnes herself, continually frustrates the neat, polarised narrative of his letters. Just as we have repeatedly seen in Damian's own life, the idea that there were people of the world and people not of the world was fundamentally false. The empress's post-regency role remained contested. There was a general uncertainty surrounding the 'correct' activities for a queen-mother, and a new intensity surrounding the symbols of religious and imperial power, and the relationship between them. Sansterre has outlined many of the responses from contemporary (almost always monastic) writers, and it must be said that whilst Damian rather overreached himself in his plans for the empress, others did write about her in similar terms.<sup>564</sup> Damian and John of Fécamp, her holy advisors, emphasised her 'holy widowhood' to the exclusion of everything else. But those chroniclers who approved of her political activities sought to justify them within the same religious paradigm.

Hildebrand, as Pope Gregory VII, seems to have been the contemporary who strayed furthest from the image of the reclusive holy widow in his representation of Agnes. She was still an example for other lay potentates, but not as a paragon of secluded ascetic perfection as Damian envisaged. In a letter written by Gregory in 1075, she appears as very much an active champion of the Church, with more in common with the countesses Beatrice and Matilda – who aided the pope as much through force of arms as through displays of piety – than with the holy widowhood of Countess Blanca:

Be it further known to Your Highness that we are just now hard pressed in the cause of St. Peter, chief of the Apostles, and that your devoted Beatrice

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<sup>564</sup> Sansterre 'Mère du Roi' esp. pp. 168 – 171.

and Matilda, daughters to us both, are labouring day and night in our behalf, following your example and imitating you as faithful pupils of their lady and mistress. Through you a new example of ancient joy comes to my memory — through you, I say, I am reminded of those women who once sought their Lord in the sepulchre. For as they first of all the disciples came to the Lord's tomb in the wondrous ardour of their affection, so you have visited the Church of Christ laid in the sepulchre of affliction before many others — nay, before almost all the princes of the world in pious service. You strive with all your strength that she may rise again to her state of freedom and, taught as it were by angelic answers, you call others to the support of the struggling Church.<sup>565</sup>

This trio of women, obvious to Gregory's mind, is rather different from what we see in Damian's letters, where Agnes was represented in similar mode to Countess Blanca, rather than Beatrice, who in turn appears to have shared more, at least in the manner of Damian's approach, with Adelaide.<sup>566</sup> But we should not assume that Agnes was simply a passive figure, whirled from one kind of religious activity to another, forever co-opted by the serious and driven male figures around her. Even in the letters of

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<sup>565</sup> E. Emerton (trans.), *The Correspondence of Pope Gregory VII: Selected Letters from the Registrum*, (New York, 1932) pp. 36 – 37; “De caetero sciat eminentia vestra nos his temporibus pro causa beati Petri apostolorum principis in labore non parvo positos et vestram in omnibus Beatricem nee non et communem filiam nostram Mathildim die noctuque in nostro multum adiutorio desudare, utpote vos sequentes vos sicut dominam et magistram discipule fideliter imitantes. Per vos itaque novum exemplum antike letitiae, per vos, inquam, ille mulieres olim querentes Dominum in monumento saepe nobis ad memoriam redeunt. Nam sicut ille pre cunctis discipulis ad sepulchrum Domini miro caritatis ardore venerunt, ita vos ecclesiam Christi quasi in sepulchro, afflictionis positam pre multis immo pene pre omnibus terrarum principibus pio amore visitatis et, ut ad statum libertatis sue resurgat, totis viribus annitentes quasi angelicis instructae responsis caeteros ad suffragium laborantis ecclesiae provocatis.” E. Caspar (ed.) *Epistolae Selectae: Gregorii VII Registrum Lib. I – IV* (Berlin, 1920), pp. 121 – 123.

<sup>566</sup> There was a difference of circumstances by 1075, as Beatrice had been widowed, and Matilda was separated from her husband. There are no letters that survive from Damian to Beatrice after Godfrey's death, which may be significant in itself, but which also curtails comparisons.

Damian and John of Fécamp make it clear that Agnes was actively seeking their advice.

Thus John writes:

Not long ago, lady empress, it pleased you to ask that I collect splendid and brief words from scriptures, in which you might learn the norm of living well according to the law of your order [the monastery that John refers to elsewhere] without grave labour.<sup>567</sup>

And likewise in Damian's Letter 104:

So it is that you asked of me, through the venerable Bishop Rainaldus of Como, whether it was allowed for people to ruminate on some of the psalms during the disposal of natural needs.<sup>568</sup>

To which, incidentally, Damian replied that it is indeed acceptable, although better to do it (that is, recite or mull over the psalms) silently. His reason for including this topic is so that people marvel that Agnes never wanted to not be praying.<sup>569</sup> Judging from Damian's letters as a whole, it was common for holy men, particularly those from Italy, to approach Damian with theological and practical questions.<sup>570</sup> The practice also extended to the laity, as in Letter 1, discussed above, where Damian composed a tract against the Jews at the request of the nobleman Honestus, which Damian received

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<sup>567</sup> "Dudum quidem, domina imperatrix, tibi petere placuit, ut ex scripturis colligerem luculentos brevesque sermones, in quibus iuxta legem originis tui absque gravi labore discere posses normam bene vivendi." J. Leclercq and J. Bonnes (eds.) *Un Maître*, p.211-17.

<sup>568</sup> Blum 5, p. 154; "Hinc est, quod a me per venerabilem Rainaldum Cumanum episcopum requisisti, utrum liceret homini inter ipsum debiti naturalis egerium aliquid ruminare psalmorum." Reindel 3, p. 150

<sup>569</sup> Reindel 3, p.150.

<sup>570</sup> See, for example, letters 9, 58 and 173. Later in his career he also responded to more hostile challenges of his writings and sermons; see letters 121 and 148.



“through our brother Leo”.<sup>571</sup> When Rainaldus contacted Damian isn’t clear. Agnes did not write to Damian herself, as she apparently did to John, and to the abbot of Fruttuaria. Perhaps it was through Rainaldus that Agnes came to know of Damian as an advisor in these matters, in a similar manner to Honestus and Leo in Letter 1, although she may have heard of Damian through her husband.

Agnes’s agency can be further observed in her interactions with the Italian monasteries of Monte Cassino and Fruttuaria. We saw how, in the case of Cassino, this took her away from the eremitic-ascetic priorities of Damian. In the letter to Fruttuaria also, she asked the monks to accept a “little gift” (*munusculum*). What manner of imperial generosity was masked by the word *munusculum*, we cannot know, but this (probable) use of a modesty *topos* may be the flipside of the celebration of abundance recorded in the *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*. What she asked in return, remembrance in the monks’ prayers, was certainly familiar to Damian:

Good health; and you, good father, diligently commend me to the spiritual brothers of the cloisters and the cells, so that they make me a participant in their prayers and fasts and all their good deeds.<sup>572</sup>

There were clearly mutual benefits derived from these associations. Monte Cassino, for example, profited in both a material sense and in terms of prestige. Agnes may have had the promotion of dynastic reputation in mind, generally extending the presence of the

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<sup>571</sup> “...per fratrem nostrum Leonem” Reindel 1, p. 65.

<sup>572</sup> “Valete; et tu, pater bone, diligenter commenda me spiritalioribus fratribus de coenobiis atque cellis, ut faciant me participem in orationibus et ieiuniis atque omnibus benefactis suis.” Struve, ‘Zwei Briefe der Kaiserin Agnes’ *Historisches Jahrbuch* 104 (Munich, 1984), pp.411 – 424; p. 424; The reappearance of ‘cells’ here hints at Agnes’s interest in a particular kind of asceticism, and may foreshadow her living arrangements in Rome.

imperial family in Italy in a way that she had failed to do during the regency (as at Fruttuaria), and renewing her relationship with those groups that she had alienated through her support of Cadalus. As has been seen in earlier chapters, monasteries were key institutions of regional power, and they could be central to royal widows' post-rule existence (although Agnes did not found, re-found or become an abbess of a nunnery – she remained comparatively mobile and active until her death).<sup>573</sup>

Damian's relationship with Agnes was likewise beneficial to both parties. Agnes did not present him with gifts akin to those she gave to Monte Cassino,<sup>574</sup> but her choice to come to him is part of the general pattern of her decisions about to whom she should give and when, who to ask for advice, and whom, moreover, to ask for forgiveness. The mutual benefits to her confession recorded obliquely in Letter 104, and to their association in general, should not be discounted. Damian, moreover, certainly wasn't shy about recounting the conversations shared by Agnes, the Bishop of Como and himself to his nephew in Letter 123.<sup>575</sup> Damian, as we have seen, frequently dropped the names of those he had heard stories or pearls of wisdom from into his letters, and it can hardly be lost on the reader that some of these names were very impressive. Unlike the Romuald of his *vita*, or the desert fathers in the books of his library, Damian did not wait in seclusion for the imperial personage to come to him.

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<sup>573</sup> On the importance of nunneries in a ninth-century context, see S. MacLean, 'Queenship, Nunneries and Royal Widowhood in Carolingian Europe' *Past and Present* 178 (2003) pp. 3 – 38. For the importance of monasteries and abbots in eleventh-century Italian politics see Andenna 'Adelaide', pp. 77 – 102.

<sup>574</sup> At least there is no trace of her in the extant charters concerning Fonte Avellana.

<sup>575</sup> See Blum 6, pp. 14 – 15. It is this section of the letter that had the space left from illumination in *Chig.A.V.145*. Whether it was illuminated in the material from which this manuscript was copied is impossible to tell.

Damian did not object to imperial power, or its role in relation to the Church. He did stand against certain forms of excess, particularly when violence of the Cadalus controversy became a threat to religious institutional structures, and to peace. Nor were his attacks on Agnes's rule caused simply by a general animosity towards powerful women, as he was quite capable of endorsing the rule of women like Adelaide of Turin when circumstances brought them together. Rather, Damian's opinion of her regency appears to have been permanently coloured by her association with the antipope. He sought to use the unbalanced, gendered images and structures of power and femininity to undermine the empress's right to power, and afterwards to erase the memory of her role, largely through the degrading of her relationship with her son, and the insistence on defining her coming to Rome as a definitive break with her old life.<sup>576</sup> Damian had confronted by a difficult situation when the rulers of the Empire had actively backed the 'wrong' papal candidate, and he responded in the complex, and sometimes cynical fashion catalogued above.

But Damian's eremitic-ascetic image of the empress had only limited success amongst those of other writers in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The empress, of course, provides something of a unique context for his eremitical thought. His letters that expounded the virtues of his fellow Avellanian hermits, like the letter he sent to Teuzo, relied on the in-built narrative that said hermits would be mortified to learn that he was spreading word of their ascetic feats, and this appeared too in Letter 104. This was how Damian invited the 'layman's gaze' upon those who were supposedly hidden away from

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<sup>576</sup> Stalin is said to have remarked that if Nadezhda Krupskaya did not stop criticising him, then the Party might have to "find Lenin a new widow." We might say that Damian tried his hardest to create a new widow out of Agnes herself. A. Hochschild *The Unquiet Ghost: Russians Remember Stalin* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York, 2003) xiv – xv.

the world.<sup>577</sup> I have tried to show in this thesis that even at the level of Damian's subordinate hermits this separation from 'the world' was a good deal more complicated than Damian liked to present. But did he really think that someone like Agnes could live somewhere like Rome in perfect solitude? She was such a high-profile figure that the fiction of seclusion was extremely difficult to maintain. In this Damian differed not only from contemporary chroniclers like Berthold of Reichenau, but also from writers of the previous century who had celebrated the holiness of the queens Matilda and Adelheid in a manner which embraced their roles in family and politics.<sup>578</sup> Berthold saw the ascetic feats of Agnes as part of her post-regency political presence. But the evidence is that Damian sought on his part to confine her to a more passive spiritual life, even when Agnes was so thoroughly in the papal camp after 1065. Pursuing the idea of a 'holy widowhood' was perhaps the safest option in regards the queen mother given the need to renew the relationship between the pope, the Church and the future emperor. Damian also genuinely valued the empress as a cloistered spiritual exemplar: had he succeeded he would have had the ultimate example of worldly rejection. But the social status of an individual had an enormous impact on their relationship with their asceticism, and how their asceticism was viewed by others. Just as Damian's own life cannot be adequately explained by the worldly/other-worldly dichotomy, so too the forms of political engagement open to Agnes as dowager-empress proved incompatible with even the malleable, urbanised form of ascetic solitude that Damian attempted to impress upon her.

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<sup>577</sup> The 'layman's gaze', moreover, was thus maintained as a presence for the hermits themselves.

<sup>578</sup> S. Gilsdorf (ed. and trans.), *Queenship and Sanctity: The Lives of Mathilda and the Epitaph of Adelheid* (Washington, 2004), esp. pp. 35 – 46.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Whilst attending a post-conference drinks reception mid-way through my research, I told a highly-respected historian of my subject, to which they replied: “Peter Damian? But he was a loony!” This view, which for a time held sway in the historiography, has, mercifully, been losing its grip in more recent scholarship. My thesis has, I hope, contributed to its debunking. Damian was thoroughly embedded in the cultures of northern and central Italy. There is a sense of collaboration, and sometimes conflict, between himself and many different kinds of people, be they in the monasteries around Ravenna, the countryside around Fonte Avellana, or in the episcopal and papal palaces in the cities that he visited. Damian was first and foremost a monastic writer: his asceticism framed his contact with others, and this is nowhere more evident than in the way he presented himself to his readers as ‘the monk Peter the sinner’. But to say that he turned his back on ‘the world’ and, as we saw in the introduction to this thesis, kept it at arms length by dispatching letters from his remote cell does not realistically reflect the extent to which Damian was engaging with society at a local and regional level. His legations, of course, took him even beyond these spheres, and no doubt raised his profile north of the Alps. But they shouldn’t be seen as anomalous blips in an otherwise withdrawn existence. Indeed, he had already become embroiled in disputes in Florence long before he was sent there as legate, and had formed relationships with Adelaide of Turin and the Empress Agnes some years before he travelled to Frankfurt to save their children’s marriage. His late trip to Ravenna, of course, also fits this pattern.

This point extends to his episcopal duties. The evidence for his other-worldly reluctance, the idea that Damian “was trapped by papal command into becoming the

cardinal bishop of Ostia, and found himself on a round of legations and services to the papacy”,<sup>579</sup> comes from a set of three letters that he wrote between 1058 and 1060, asking first Pope Nicholas II (Letters 57 and 72), and then Archdeacon Hildebrand (Letter 76), to be relieved of his position. Whether these letters were sincere or not, I do not think it would be unfair to Damian to point out the similarity between his representation of how Rodulf of Montecavallo combined his eremitism and his role as bishop of Gubbio,<sup>580</sup> and how Damian talks about himself in these letters. In both cases the emphasis is on the incumbent bishop’s discomfort with public honour, and their desire for *solitudo*. And in both cases they continued in their office. This is what it meant to be an eremitic figure in the high clergy, and his position as cardinal-bishop became thoroughly intertwined with his parallel roles as hermit and leader of the Avellan network of religious houses. This intermingling of roles created ambiguities and contradictions in the way Damian approached the people of ‘the world’. But ultimately these ambiguities were a source of strength for Damian, rather than a weakness. In different social arenas he could draw on the ‘cultural capital’ of his education, his asceticism or his episcopal rank, or any combination of the above: a potent mixture of charismatic and institutional authority. He knew that the study of the liberal arts was of limited worth, because he was as versed in them as anyone else in Italy at the time. He knew he could be a good cardinal-bishop, because he didn’t want to be. And he knew that associating with the most powerful people in northern and central Italy was a waste of time, as he complained in Letter 165, because he had spent 30 years of his life doing it.<sup>581</sup> He knew, moreover, that the people that he dealt with in the world knew these things about him, because he told them.

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<sup>579</sup> Jestice, ‘Peter Damian’, p. 81.

<sup>580</sup> See above, Introduction, pp. 21 – 22.

<sup>581</sup> See Letter 165 (1069), Blum 7, p. 221.

Returning to the question of how we should see his role as cardinal, it seems that we cannot read his life in such an episodic way, by suggesting that his promotion to the curia caused a dramatic shift in his relationship with ‘the world’. Only ten of the forty-seven letters that survive from before Damian’s promotion were to monastic or eremitic figures, and around Ravenna monastic and episcopal reform were hardly discrete categories of activity. On the other hand, there were distinct phases of activity in his life: his focus on Ravenna, and to an extent the churches of the Marche region, gave way in the 1050s to concerns in Tuscany and, of course Rome. And all the while there were the developments around Fonte Avellana and his hermitages further afield that forged links with local families. To say that his eremitism removed him from the world misses the essential point that his eremitism was actually a way of dealing with the world. His ascetic regime in the secluded mountainside hermitage of Fonte Avellana structured his relationship not only with God, but with the wider community as well. His particular blend of learned and spiritual authority appealed to ecclesiastical and lay magnates, but also people lower down the social scale, like Peter the priest, who gave two *modii* of land to Fonte Avellana for the souls of himself and his family.<sup>582</sup>

Damian was, in this sense, ‘right for the times’. Christopher Brooke’s suggestion that it was “extraordinary chance that placed [Damian] so near the centre of the church’s government”<sup>583</sup> does not hold water. He was not just part of an eccentric group of ‘great men’, imposing Reform on a chaotic world. He was involved, in a broad, localised way, with many different groups who all had reform on their minds, and for each group that meant rather different things. His exceptional intellect

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<sup>582</sup> Pierucci and Polverari, *Fonte Avellana*, no. 10, pp. 23 – 25. A *modius*, at least in classical Latin, was equal to a third of an acre.

<sup>583</sup> Brooke, *The Medieval Idea*, pp. 135 – 136, quoted in d’Avray, ‘Consanguinity’, p. 72.

notwithstanding,<sup>584</sup> Damian's rise to prominence was only as surprising as those of other men from 'middling' backgrounds who, having received an urban education, went on to forge significant ecclesiastical careers – Lanfranc and Hildebrand among them.<sup>585</sup>

What is extraordinary about Damian is the richness of the written material that he left behind. Whilst I do not think that the letters afford us a clear-paned window into Damian's soul, they do remain an underexploited resource in the study of Italian social history. The letters reveal how Damian saw the role of public figures like the margraves of Tuscany, a generation before their extinction. They give a partial view of urban landscapes like Ravenna, Florence and Milan that were alive with competing claims to authority, and religious innovations of their own. And they bring a whole new dimension to the study of his monasteries and hermitages that dotted the spine of Italy, and the relationships that these institutions forged with the people that invested in them, economically and spiritually. There are the conflicts that these new religious institutions like Acetera and Gamugno encountered, amongst themselves, but also with the local tenants who stood to lose out from their lords' patronage of the new eremitism. Though Damian did not address the lower classes directly, they imposed themselves in these kinds of circumstances in a changing landscape. Fonte Avellana itself appears to have profited from the *incastellamento*, as can be seen in the foundation of Camporeggiano, through the transference of castles' *iura* and pertinences. And the fact that institutions as remote as Gamugno and Acereta could spark land disputes at all may be indicative of the increasing pressure for productive land. There are, too, colourful

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<sup>584</sup> As Chris Wickham put it, "There will be few historians who will try to deny that Italian high culture had few major luminaries between Gregory the Great and Peter Damiani," Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*, p. 4.

<sup>585</sup> Although the evidence for Hildebrand is scant, his background appears to have been 'modest'. See H. E. J. Cowdrey, *Pope Gregory VII 1073 – 1085* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 27 – 29. Again working from scant and retrospective evidence, Lanfranc's father appears to have been a *iudex*, which in Pavia was quite a big deal. Lanfranc, like Damian, left his native city to pursue the liberal arts. Cowdrey, *Lanfranc*, pp. 5 – 9.



anecdotal flashes of everyday life: the peasant, strapped for cash, having to repay a loan with vegetables;<sup>586</sup> the young, betrothed women of Italy stuffing whatever useful thing they could find into ‘hope chests’ to take with them into their new homes.<sup>587</sup> Damian is rarely cited in the social histories of eleventh-century Italy, but there is a great wealth of material in his writings that can get us out of his eremitic cell, and into the world that supported it.

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<sup>586</sup> See Letter 153.

<sup>587</sup> See Letter 94.

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